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AN INVESTIGATION
INTO THE CAUSES OF THE LABOUR AGITATION
ON THE WITWATERSRAND, JANUARY TO MARCH. 1922

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of History

University of the Witwatersrand

In Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Bernard Hessian B A.(Hons.)(Rand)

April 1967

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Thesis

APPRECIATION

The writer very sincerely thanks Professor J.S.Marais for his patient supervision, Mr.R.B.Ballinger and Mr.J.W.Horton for their constant encouragement, and Miss D.Hartwell and Miss V.Hamilton for their kind assistance.

UNDERTAKING

I hereby certify that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree of any other university.

Bernard Hussian.....

PREFACE

No serious research has previously been done on the labour agitation on the Witwatersrand in 1922, to the knowledge of the writer. Much of what has been written on the subject is unashamedly partisan. The rest is mostly factual reporting.

This information has not misled writers of history who have touched on the events of 1922 in general works. The conclusions reached on 1922, broad and general as they are, have not been found by the writer to be wrong, if it is borne in mind that general statements usually tell only a part of the story.

This thesis attempts to present the many sided 1922 labour agitation with a completeness not before attempted. In doing so, it hopes to give a satisfactory account of events which were for long the playthings of labour and capitalist propagandists.

The writer asked himself simply: "What caused this labour agitation?" He distinguished the parties involved, and examined their relations which existed between them. These relationships suggested the form of the chapters.

To achieve clarity in an account which cannot be strictly chronological, the writer attempted to follow a rough chronological pattern in each chapter, as far as explaination and proof would allow. The chapters deal with various aspects of the agitation, but as these aspects figured most prominently at different times during the agitation, it has been possible to make the chapters follow each other in a rough time sequence.

The evidence available to the writer was only a part of that which is in existance. Neither the State Archives nor the Transvaal and Orange Free State Chamber of Mines would open up to the writer their evidence on the labour agitation. In both cases the reason given was that persons involved in the agitation are still living.

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THE BACKGROUND TO THE LABOUR AGITATION

Chapter I

During the first three months of 1922, the people of the Witwatersrand witnessed the biggest strike which has yet occurred in South Africa, and the most spectacular revolt against authority that the Union has seen.

The strike began on January 10 and was called off on March 18. The revolt began in the early hours of March 10 and was over in the late afternoon of March 14. These events were bound so closely that people still argue that there was no revolt at all, but merely an outbreak of violence towards the end of the strike.

This industrial unrest in 1922 caused excitement, bloodshed and demagogy not usually associated with the Witwatersrand. For the White mine workers of the Rand it was in many ways a tragedy. The failure of the strike mortally injured the solid trade unionism which English, Welsh and Australian miners had brought with them to the gold mines. That type of trade unionism was overwelmed by extreme elements during the strike, and dealt crushing blows by the Chamber of Mines when the strike was over. Trade unionism on the Rand was fading by 1922 because the workmen from overseas who understood it, and made it function, were disappearing as a strong force among the White mine workers, who were becoming predominantly Afrikaner.* This new mass of mine workers preferred the banner of Colour to that of Labour, and the Afrikaners tended to swing away from the British labourites to the Nationalist leaders who spoke their own language. So labour as an industrial force shrunk to pigmy size, helped to dwarfdom by the Industrial Conciliation Act.

The failure of the strike caused thousands of White mine

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* In 1910, 7,285 or 27.2 per cent. of Rand White mine workers were South African born. By 1921, that figure had risen to 13,519 or 51.5 per cent. (M.H.de Kock "Economic History of South Africa" page 143)
Seventy-five per cent. of the "labour forces employed on the Rand at the outbreak of the strike" were "Dutch South Africans" (Martial Law Inquiry UG 35-1922) para 98)

workers to suffer unemployment, and for some years to live in aimless idleness and poverty. It caused many hundreds of men to be imprisoned for up to two years, until the Hertzog government got a general amnesty granted in 1924. The violence during the strike caused the death of 76 soldiers and police, 78 civilians and rebels, and 31 Natives. The authorities arrested 4,692 men, 62 women and four children. Eighteen men were condemned to death for murder or high treason, and four were eventually hanged.

In 1924 the White mine workers achieved most of the benefits for which they had agitated during the strike. The Smuts government, which many of them had wanted to remove, fell two years later by constitutional means. The new National Party - Labour pact government gave the White workers a guarantee that their privileges over Black mine workers would be entrenched. The amendments to the Industrial Conciliation Act secured them from arbitrary decisions of the mine owners.

The 1922 labour agitation extended beyond the Rand. The coal miners at Witbank and the surrounding mines were on strike, as were the steel workers at Vereeniging, the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company's employees on the Vaal, and various other small bodies of workers. But the use of the term Witwatersrand in the thesis title is convenient, since these other areas have no territorial defination, and it is not misleading, since these areas played an unimportant part in the agitation, and the strike fizzled out in them before the Rand erupted in revolt.

1* Before the strike, in December 1921, 9,431 Whites were employed underground. Two months after the strike, only 6,450 were employed. (Mining Industry Arbitration Board 1926-7.p 391)

2* The sentences meted out by Martial Law courts were considered severe. (Rex vs. S. Goldman 1922)(Rand Daily Mail 18.5.22)

3* Wounded were 199 military and police, 287 civilians and rebels, and 67 non-Europeans. (Round Table 21.4.1922)

4* These were S.A. Long, H.K. Hull, D. Lewis and C.C. Stas[illegible], all for murder. "Taffy" Long caught the public imagination and 50,000 attended his funeral. Rumour was that this discouraged the government from further hangings.

What, in a nutshell, was the 1922 labour unrest about? Very broadly, the workers were agitating to preserve "White privilege against black encroachment."[1]

In December, 1921, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines stated that it was the intention of the mining houses to replace about 2,000 White gold mine workers by Natives, to cut working costs. That caused the strike of the White gold mine workers, who formed the vast bulk of all the 1922 strikers. The main cause of the "Rand Revolt" was the failure of the strikers to preserve White privilege against encroachment by constitutional means.

The White privilege - Black encroachment motif ran through the labour unrest, but a host of other factors, socialism, nationalism, capitalism, racialism, Bolshevism, politics, hooliganism, were involved. These, and the influence of certain men, gave to the 1922 labour agitation its particular history.

This thesis must unravel that history. The more picturesque details of the unrest, the seiges of police stations, the ambush of government forces, the snipers on mine dumps and tree tops, the bombardments, the last ditch fight, are merely the ending of the agitation, the climax of the fever, the outward eruption of the disease. The revolt could never have occurred had the strike not become inflamatory, and the reasons why the strike became inflamatory are therefore the main interest of the thesis.

The labour unrest of 1922 was the last and greatest of a group of strikers which occurred on the Witwatersrand in the first quarter of this century. Labour disputes occurred from the time when one man employed another to dig for him, but the first large scale strike of White mine workers took place in 1907. This strike arose out of unrest caused by a gradual decrease in the number of White men employed on the mines, and a gradual increase of Blacks. A walk-out at Knights Deep spread rapidly to every part of the Rand, but the strike rapidly ended in confusion because of lack of organisation.

[1] SOUTH AFRICA - A SHORT HISTORY PAGE 163

This was followed by two bigger strikes, in 1913 and in 1914. The 1913 strike arose out of a "petty quarrel between a new manager and some miners on the New Kleinfontein Mine"[1] about working hours. The mine workers of the Rand took up the cause of five underground mechanics who had been dismissed. The New Kleinfontein management refused to retract, even under government pressure, and resentment worked rapidly up to a general strike of mine workers which took the Chamber of Mines and the Botha government completely by surprise. Long standing resentment found vent in mob demonstrations outside the Rand Club in Johannesburg. A miner bared his breast to armed police guarding the club and shouted "Shoot." A shot was fired, the miner fell dead and soon the street was a shambles as police and strikers fired at each other. Prime Minister Botha and his deputy General Smuts raced to the Rand to settle the violence which they had not the armed forces to put down, but were forced to agree to most of the strikers' demands. General Smuts took precautions against a recurrance of this situation. When, in January 1914, a new Rand crisis arose with a strike on the South African Railways, and trade union leaders threatened to force their still unsatisfied demands by means of a general strike, Smuts was ready. The police swooped down on seven of the most prominent workers' leaders. They were raced down to Durban and shipped out of South Africa before the strikers could get a writ demanding the release of these men from illegal arrest. Legalists thundered against Smuts' methods, but the strike had been killed and Parliament passed an Indemnity Act.

The 1913 strike indicated that violence could bring victory to strikers when all else failed. The 1914 strike seemed to show that Smuts was anti-labour, (since the deportations had favoured the mine owners)[2] and ruthless. These impressions influenced

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[1] Eric Walker "History of South Africa" page 321.

[2] The workers in 1922 remembered (Sunday Times 22.1.1928)

very profoundly the 1922 labour unrest.

Strike followed strike on the Rand in the unsettled post-war years. In 1918 over one thousand Randfontein mine employees struck. The Johannesburg electricity supply was cut off by a strike of Power House employees. The Transvaal Iron Mongers struck for higher wages. In 1920 there was a month-long Engineers' Strike, followed by the Engine Drivers Society on the Rand downing tools for a week-end. Then 40,000 Native mine workers went out on strike for higher wages, but the police drove them back to the compounds. Some Natives were imprisoned, others sent back to their kraals. For a moment it seemed that a new force had entered the traditional Chamber of Mines - White trade unions field of battle. The 1922 agitation was also a reply to that sort of threat.

The declaration of the 1922 strike was trade unionism's reply to certain changes demanded in December 1921 by the mine managements through the Chamber of Mines.

In the second half of 1921 a series of conferences between the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and the South African Industrial Federation were held in Johannesburg, at which the critical position of the low grade gold mines on the Rand was discussed.

As both the Chamber of Mines and the S.A.Industrial Federation (S.A.I.F.) figure very largely in this thesis, I will introduce them.

The Transvaal Chamber of Mines was a secretariate rather than an executive body, being the creation of the gold mining companies to represent them to the government, to the gold mine employees, and to the public. Because the interests of the gold mining companies were usually identical, they could be expressed with one voice through the Chamber of Mines. The companies financed and directed the Chamber of Mines, which had no managerial nor administrative authority over its members, but existed to serve them. As the various companies settled their differences in private, and spoke through the mouthpiece of the Chamber, the Chamber had the appearance of being a

being a powerful body. However, when the Chamber was criticised, what was really being criticised was the group of mining companies who were members of the Chamber.

The S.A.I.F.[1] was, on paper, a powerful body. In 1919 it had a membership of 47,001, with 45 affiliated unions.[2] Its weakness was that it was a federal body, and when workers found that the interests of their trade union were not identical with those of the Federation, they tended to be unionists first and federationists second. As only about half of the members of the S.A.I.F. were gold mine workers, the S.A.I.F., in a predominantly gold mine strike, was obviously more likely to have internal squabbles than was the Chamber of Mines. To minimise internal stress, the S.A.I.F. tried to give the executive of the proposed strike as broad and as popular a basis as possible. Also the S.A.I.F. wanted to rope into the strike all trade unions on the Rand that were not affiliated to it. When the strike ballot was being drafted, therefore, the S.A.I.F. invited all trade unions, affiliated or otherwise, to appoint representatives to augment the executive of the S.A.I.F. during the duration of the proposed strike. This enlarged executive was known as the S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive, or the Augmented Executive. The S.A.I.F. was short of funds with which to fight a strike, and hoped that unions would be more ready to co-operate financially if they had direct representation on the controlling body of the strike.

In December, 1921, the S.A.I.F., on behalf of affiliated unions, was simultaneously conducting negotiations with the Chamber of Mines gold producing section, the Chamber of Mines

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1* Before 1913 it had been known as the Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council. In 1915 it was given full recognition by the Chamber of Mines (M.H. de Kock "Economic History of S.Africa" page 145)

2* Full list of affiliated unions in Rand Daily Mail 7.3.1922

coal producing section, the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company, the Engineers and Founders' Association, and the South African Motor Traders Association. We shall now consider how it was that the employees of all these bodies went out on strike together.

During the 1921 conferences, the Chamber of Mines gradually formulated a list of changes on the gold mines which, it argued, would save the low grade mines from having to close down.[1] These changes were (a) an alteration in the system of underground contracts i.e. the miners who worked under contract should be paid less (b) a modification of the Status Quo Agreement i.e. 2,000 White semi-skilled workers should be replaced by Non-Europeans so that the difference in wages between White and Black could be saved (c) a rearrangement of the underground work system i.e. underground work should be made as productive and economical as possible.[1] The Chamber was also demanding that the post war cost of living allowance should be done away with altogether.[2]

The only drastic measure proposed was the modification of the Status Quo Agreement. The next chapter will explain this.

While the S.A.I.F. was disputing the validity and effectiveness of the proposed changes, the Chamber of Mines, on December 10, gave notice to the Federation of the termination of certain wage agreements, and of its intention to withdraw the Status Quo Agreement as from January 31, 1922.[4]

The S.A.I.F. accused the Chamber of deliberately undermining the conferences by this declaration, and said that the

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1* The Round Table 19.1.1922 No.45

2* Ibid

3* In 1921 the Chamber and the S.A.I.F. agreed that if the c.o.l. fell to below 121 per cent (prewar retail prices representing 100 per cent.) then the c.o.l. allowance should be done away with. In January, 1922, the Chamber brought forward calculations to prove that the c.o.l. had dropped below 121 per cent., but the Federation disputed these figures. (T.A. Richard "Conditions on the Rand" Engineering and Mining Journal. 3.6.1922)

4* Gitsham and Trembath "Labour Organisation in S. Africa" p.49

the removal of the Status Quo was an ultimatum.

The Chamber refused to withdraw its notices, on the grounds that the Federation had suggested nothing constructive during the conferences, and that the gold mine crisis was much too serious to allow for endless useless conferences.[1*]

On the night of 31.12.1921, a conference, representative of the large majority of trade unions on the Rand, decided to take a strike ballot "against the ultimatums issued by the Chamber of Mines Gold Section, the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company, the Engineers and Iron Founders' Association and the S.A. Motor Traders Association" The ballot was returnable on January 8.[2*]

The ballot returns showed 13,500 in favour of a strike, and 1,336 against it. Twenty-two thousand White workers had had the right to vote.[3*] They were the employees of the four bodies of employers who had issued the"ultimatums", and on 9.1.1922 the S.A.I.F.'s augmented executive ordered the 22,000 to go on strike as from the following morning.[4*]

I have dealt with the "ultimatums" issued by the Chamber of Mines. What were the "ultimatums" issued by the other three bodies of employers?

Since 1920, the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company (V.F.P.), the S.A. Motor Traders Association and the Engineers and Iron Founders Association had each made wage agreements with their employees which depended on conditions of employment on the gold mines. In April, 1920, the employees of the Engineers and Founders' Association had agreed to accept in the future the same wages and working conditions as applied to the engineers on the gold mines. Also in April, 1920, the employees of the S.A. Motor Traders Association had agreed that whatever

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1* Brutus "Never Again" page 43

2* Martial Law Inquiry UG 35-1922 para 18.

3* About 20,000 of these were gold mine workers, belonging to the S.A. Mine Workers Union, the S.A. Reduction Workers, the S.A. Amalgamated Engine Drivers' Society, and such members of the Amalgamated Woodworkers Union, the Building Workers Industrial Union, the Ironmoulders Society and the Boilermakers Society as were connected with the mines.

4* DRUMMOND "THE OUTBREAK" p.23.

settlement was come to between the S.A.I.F. and the Engineers and Founders Association would be considered by them as being binding also on themselves.[1*] Thus the motor mechanics were in a position vis-a-vis the Engineers and Founders Association employees identical to that of the Engineers and Founders Association employees vis-a-vis the Chamber of Mines employees. As part of its economy campaign, the Chamber of Mines in late 1921 had mentioned that the wages of the mechanics it employed should be reduced. This immediately brought the two Associations and their employees into the negotiations between the Chamber and the S.A.I.F. It also immediately implicated the V.F.P. employees, who had been demanding the same wages as qualified mechanics on the gold mines.

Thus it was no coincidence that the S.A.I.F. was handling the disputes of these four groups of workers at the same time.

Each body of workers had met the threat of decreased wages by demanding higher wages. While the Chamber did not come to any definate decision regarding wage reductions, the Engineers and Founders Association gave notice that it would reduce wages from 1.2.1922. Before the Motor Traders could follow this example, their employees on 23.12.22 demanded, through the S.A.I.F., a considerable increase in wages. The V.F.P. employees demanded time-and-a-half pay on Sundays, which amounted to a higher wages demand.[2*]

In reply, the employers pointed to the agreements of April, 1920. Private settlements might have been possible, but the S.A.I.F. managed to incorporate the motor mechanics, the Engineers and Founders Association employees and the V.F.P. employees into its dispute with the Chamber on behalf of the gold miners, because of the brusqueness of the employers in

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1* From February to April, 1920, the employees of both Associations had been on strike. In settlement, the Engineers and Founders Association employees agreed to accept in the future the terms of employment given by the Chamber of Mines to its employees, and the motor mechanics agreed to follow the wage standards of the Engineers and Founders Association (T.A. Richard "Conditions on the Rand" Engineering and Mining Journal 3.6.1922)

2* Getsham and Trembath "Labour Organisation in S. Africa" p.49

making their demands was greatly resented by the workers. The employees of the Engineers and Founders Association and the S.A. Motor Traders Association said that they had struck because they had not been given three months notice of projected changes (which they said was their right)[1*], while the V.F.P. employees emphasised that they joined the strike in defence of the principle of collective bargaining.[2*] In doing this, these employees took up the same stand on principle that the gold and coal miners had already done.[3*]

The two Associations were determined to exercise their right to adjust wages on the scale used on the gold mines,[4*] and when the Chamber of Mines negotiators argued that both collective bargaining and three months notice were impossible because of the urgency of the crisis on the low grade mines of the Rand, and on the coal mines, the Associations also stated that the critical state of their finances allowed for no delay. Most of the V.F.P. Company's business was supplying electricity to the gold mines, and the V.F.P directorate ...ued that the financial difficulties of the mines meant that ...gher rates to meet rising production costs were out of the ...estion. Therefore no settlement was possible but that dictated by the V.F.P. Company to its employees.

1* A.C.Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of South Africa" (article)

2* The Star 26.1.1922

3* Nine days before the main strike, on January 1, 800 coal miners in the Witbank area went out on strike because, they said, the Chamber of Mines Colliery Section was imposing wage reductions without allowing arbitration. From February 1, wages of White coal miners were to be reduced 17 per cent. to keep the selling price of S.A. coal competative with the dropping international price. Workers said that they did not believe that wage cuts, reducing the cost of coal production by 2d. a ton, but reducing many wages below a living standard, would make or break the coal mining industry, as the Colliery Section asserted. Instead they accused the industry of taking advantage of falling wages in other occupations to increase shareholders' dividends. (Rand Daily Mail 5.1.1922, 14.1.1922, 16.1.1922, 24.1.1922. The Star 7.1.1922, 17.1.1922, 4.2.1922.)

4* A.C. Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of South Africa" (article)

The four sets of negotiations that the S.A.I.F. was carrying on simultaneously all depended, then, on the financial position of the Rand gold mines. The gold mining industry on the Rand had during and since the World War been continuously threatened by rising production costs. The cost of materials and equipment rose, and a steady inflationary national tendency necessitated new wage scales for workers. The gold mining industry could not pass on increased costs by raising the selling price of its product, but had to keep production costs below the fixed international price of gold.

The cost of producing gold had risen from 17s.11d. a ton of gold-containing ore in 1913, to 24s.11d. a ton in December, 1921.[1*] This increase of more than 39 per cent. in production costs could not have been absorbed by the gold mining industry had it not been for a very considerable increase in the price of gold in September, 1919, as the result of a sudden devaluation of sterling in terms of the dollar. The price of gold rose in a matter of days from 84s.11d. per fine oz. to about 130s. per fine oz. This increase temporally stilled managerial complaints about production costs, but the price of gold showed a downward tendency while production costs continued to rise. By December, 1921, the price of gold was only 95s., less than 12s. above the so-called normal (pre-war) price to which, it was widely thought, the price of gold would rapidly decline. A number of commissions of inquiry had pointed out that the mines were in a perilous position because of the fall in the price of gold.[2*] In the second half of 1921 the situation looked grim. In July and August the working profit of the gold mines was £1,200,000 for each month. In December the figure had dwindled to £690,000. "Seven mines out of 39 ... sustained losses, while ten others made the totally

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1* A.C. Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of South Africa" (article)

2* e.g. (Final Report of Low Grade Mines Commission UG 34-1920) (Underground Contract Commission Report UG 38-17)

inadequate profit of £1,000 or less."[1] If the price of gold were to fall to 84s., the Chamber argued, then 24 of the 39 mines on the Rand would no longer be profitable. This would destroy the already depressed gold shares, throw 10,000 White mine workers out of work, and cripple the industry on which the whole country depended.[2] Even two prominent trade union leaders on the Rand, J. George, general secretary of the Reduction Workers Association, and G. Brown, president of the Boilermakers Association, said that "a drastic reduction in the cost of the production of gold is necessary."[3]

A witch hunt started to see who was responsible for the greatly increased production costs. Native wages had risen only 9 per cent. above the pre-war scale, but White wages had risen from 5s.10d. per ton in 1913 to 9s.2d. per ton in 1920, an increase of 57 per cent.[4] In other words, average earnings had increased from £308 to £478.[5]

Instead of attempting widespread wage reductions, the Chamber of Mines tried to sack 2,000 White mine workers who it said were redundant and superfluous. The Chamber justified this plan by declaring: "The mines are merely claiming the right, which no one ever dreamed of denying the farmer or the commercial man when revenue falls off, of retrenching employees and thus improving efficiency while economising expense and keeping the industry going at full production."[6]

The retrenchment of the 2,000 White men meant, however, the removal of the Status Quo Agreement of 1918 which, the mine workers believed, guaranteed the skilled and semi-skilled jobs for them. The retrenchment implied the rush of 2,000 Non-Europeans into semi-skilled jobs, the replacement of White by Black.[7] The reaction of White workers to these threats is now considered

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1* A.C.Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of S. Africa." (article)

2* The Star 5.1.1922 3* Rand Daily Mail 5.1.1922

4* T.A. Richard "Conditions on the Rand." (article)

5* A.C.Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of S. Africa." (article)

6* Sunday Times 15.1.1922

7* Joe Thompson, vice-president S.A.I.F. (Star 13.1.1922)

COLOUR AND ECONOMICS

Chapter II

The threat of automation to artisans today helps to give a sympathetic understanding of the situation in which the White workers on the Rand were placed in 1922. The automation machine of the time was the Native mine worker. The Native labour force was ready to take over, at a lower standard wage, semi-skilled occupations[1] which had previously been filled by Whites. The Natives had a monopoly of unskilled jobs, and a proportion of the semi-skilled occupations. Now it seemed to the Whites that they would lose, at the least, the semi-skilled jobs remaining to them.

The Native labour force on the gold mines in 1922 was vast in quantity, and relatively easy to handle. Observers saw the cause of the labour unrest "in the unlimited supply of cheap indentured labour from outside the Union, which can be paid, controlled and moved, just as the Chamber of Mines wishes."[2] This indentured labour was so cheap and pliable, Labourites believed, that it had to be dammed up by agreement having the force of law if it was not to swamp the White mine workers completely out of employment.

Compared with White mine workers, who were strongly trade unionist and largely socialist, the Native mine workers were models of docility.[3] They were housed under the eye of the mine owners, and fed on a diet calculated to make them healthy workers. Most important, they were paid a wage about one-tenth of that paid to White workers.[4]

The Chamber of Mines was powerfully tempted, therefore, to

1* semi-skilled jobs were pump attending, cleaning and greasing, rough pipe fitting, tiber timbering, waste packing, drill sharpening, stone walling etc. (The Star 10.1.1922)

2* Col. F.H.P. Creswell, Labour Party leader (Rand Daily Mail 22.1.1922) Also G. Brown, Boilermakers' president (Star 5.1.22)

3* Past Native mine workers' strikes had been quickly quelled and the state gave every assistance against Native agitators.

4* Rand Daily Mail 10.2.1922., 21.2.1922.

employ Natives in semi-skilled occupations at the expense of Europeans. Had it been a matter of pure economics, as between automation machines and live workers, there might have been some hesitation on the grounds of humanity.[1*] But the mine owners argued that humanity spurred them on quite in the other direction. They held that it was as grossly unfair to keep the most intelligent and diligent Natives out of semi-skilled jobs, out of the chance of "bettering themselves", as it was unjust to employ the most stupid, troublesome and lazy of the White workers. It was not sense to disqualify workers from more skilled work because of a Black skin, and to employ useless men because their pigmentation was White. Certain of the more established magnates gave public expression to these conclusions,[2*] which appear to have occurred to them frequently, especially as their pockets stood to gain.

This attitude was strongly resented and feared by the labouring White class and its representatives, and what was no more than a strong desire of the magnates was easily converted, in the minds of the mine workers, into an absolute determination to have them displaced.

There is no reason to believe that the magnates ever intended to eliminate the White workers from the mines.[2*] However delightful a dream it might have been for some, especially when the trade unions were making increased demands and the gold premium was dropping, the scheme was too impracticable for serious consideration. It was, in fact, impossible, unless the magnates controlled Parliament and the armed forces, for no White Parliament would consent to the elimination of the White mine worker on the Rand, and no armed forces would suppress fellow Whites fighting for their existance.

1* Bishop Talbert of Pretoria (Rand Daily Mail 3.2.1922)

2* Low Grade Mines Commission majority report recommendation para 178) Sir Lionel Philips, prominant magnate, said "Colour Bar ... is both immoral and irrational" (Star 24.12.1921) (Rand Daily Mail 24.11.1921). Natives had been considered suitable for many 'white jobs' since 1907-8 (Van der Horst "Native Policy in S. Africa p208). See also Sir Evelyn Wallers, man. director Central Mining and Investment Corporation, speech at Chamber of Mines annual general meeting March 1920. (Chamber of Mines ann. rep. Annual Report 1921)

The magnates were aware, as was everyone else, that, as the chief magistrate of Johannesburg said in his annual report in 1918, "any attempt to remove the Colour Bar on the Mines ... would lead to serious trouble."[1] Mr. Patrick Duncan, Minister of the Interior, warned the House of Assembly in 1918 that any attempt to remove the Colour Bar would "lead to something in the nature of a revolution on the Rand;"[2] while the Low Grade Commission of 1920 spoke of "struggles and explosions of a violent character" if White workers were no longer protected from Black competition.[3] In addition, the magnates were not vampires, or indifferent to the fate of their industrious White workers.[4] The Natives were obviously generations away from such skills as engine driving. A Chamber of Mines spokesman said on the day before the strike broke out: "We want the White man to do the skilled jobs. However, there are a number of semi-skilled occupations underground, such as wastepacking, which cannot be described as skilled, and the mines wish to make greater use of experienced Native labour in such semi-skilled occupations."[5]

Whatever the labour leaders really believed, it suited them to represent indiscreet sayings, like Sir Lionel Philip's, as indications of a policy which the magnates were determined at all costs to carry out - this in spite of Sir Evelyn Waller's undertaking to the Prime Minister on 11.11.1921, in the presence of trade union representatives, that the Chamber of Mines would agree to guarantee White employment by fixing a ratio of Europeans to Natives.[6] After the strike had begun, the Chamber gave a definate offer of a ratio of 1 White to 10.5 Natives, on 28.1.1922.

Whether or not any of the labour leaders personally believ-

1* Report of the Department of Justice for 1918 page 112.

2* Low Grade Commission Report UG 34-1920

3* "The Story of a Crime" page 23

4* The Star 23.1.1922

5* Rand Daily Mail 9.1.1922

6* Ibid 12.11.1922

ed that the Chamber of Mines meant to replace all White mine workers, their orator..tions[1*] to that effect were believed, and had an inflammatory effect on the White working masses.[2*]

To the White worker, especially to the Afrikaans worker, this business about colour was not merely a matter of losing a job. It meant also a defeat in the battle Black vs. White which had been fought on a hundred fields in South Africa. It meant White master being replaced by Black servant.[3*] Not only complete defeat, but any reverse of White by Black was resented in a manner difficult to understand outside South Africa.

The mass of the Afrikaans mine workers were yet only half-miners in 1922,[4*] still looking back to their fathers' farms, spending their savings on smallholdings to keep contact with their tradition as frontier Boers. In some hazy way they believed in a Kaffir peril.[5*] For them the tame Natives in mine compounds were potential stamping, screaming impis, and the geweer in the voorkamer might be used to roll back the Kaffir hordes once again. This was shown in a dozen ways during the strike - the way in which inhabitants of Florida, Turffontein and Germiston went into laager in their town halls or local church against a Kaffir attack,[6*] the way in which bodies of White men rushed out with guns to the Native compounds when trouble began,[7*] the way in which groundless rumours that Natives were about to massacre Whites were implicitly believed,[8*] the way in which the Afrikaner mine workers held out after the British section had begun to scab - their evil genius Colour keeping them fighting after both they and the British mine workers had[9*]

1* Waterson M.L.A. (Rand Daily Mail 12.1.1922) Madeley M.L.A. (The Star 11.1.1922) M. Kentridge, prominent labourite (The Star 14.1.1922, 5.2.1922) S.A.I.F. executive member Gartrell (Rand Daily Mail 21.1.1922) etc.etc.
2* Alberton strike meeting (R.D. Mail 19.1.1922) Benoni Town Council meeting (R.D Mail 27.1.1922.) etc.etc.
3* e.g. W.R. Jackson, treasurer, strike relief fund. (Star 30.1.2
4* Martial Law Inquiry UG 55-1922. para 89. 5* ibid para 96
6* Rand Daily Mail 9.3.1922. The Star 9.3.1922.
7* Rand Daily Mail 10.3.1922.
8* ibid
9* The Star 27.2.1922, and 26.2.1922.

realised that the economic battle was lost. Much of the violence of March 8-14 was due to an instinctive retreat to the rifle when newly acquired and mistrusted trade unionism failed them.

Displacement on the mines of Afrikaners meant victory not only of Kaffir but of Uitlander too. The wealth and alleged lack of patriotism of the magnates, most of them living in England, or calling overseas "home", was resented by the Afrikaners who in their thousands had come to the mines. The Uitlanders had taken the wealth, now they threatened to drive the Afrikaner off the land which his ancestors had fought for three centuries to attain.[1] This threat of Uitlanders to replace Afrikaners by Kaffirs - in the "ultimatum" the threat appeared a reality - caused Afrikaners throughout South Africa[2] to shout out in defence of their civilization and their people.[3] And instead of Uitlander employer and Afrikaner employee finding common interest in building up gold production, they were split by the vast pool of Native labour. The magnate resented the high wages he was forced to pay for White labour, the worker considered gold as merely a means of keeping the White man economically and therefore socially segregated from the Black.

It would be too much to say, as it was said, that the intrusion of Black on White fields of labour was the cause of the strike of the White gold mine workers. Thompson, the chief executive of the S.A.I.F., called it only "the last straw that has broken the camel's back."[4] When Black labour, in 1916-18, had filled gaps left vacant by mine workers who had joined up, there had been no strike. In 1922 the important difference was that the Natives were displacing White workers, and that the labouring Whites had their passions aroused by the harping of their leaders on the theme "White South Africa in Danger." The White workers considered that their whole

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1* De Volksblad 23.2.1922. Vrededorp meeting (R.D. Mail 28.2.22)

2* Rand Daily Mail 17.1.1922.

3* General Smuts, in 1897 and 1907, had waxed eloquently in speeches on this subject (The Star 24.1.22) General Hertzog (R.D. Mail 11.1.22) Prominent Nat. Dr. Moll (The Star 24.1.22)

4* Rand Daily Mail 5.1.1922

status, economic and social, was threatened by the "ultimatum." In that sense they were striking on "the broad issue of the maintence of the Colour Bar."[1] They regarded the new conditions of the Chamber of Mines as an "ultimatum", that is, a life or death challenge, leaving them with a decision, yes or no, whether they would defend their identity as White workers and their standard of living. But this of itself did not start the strike. The men obviously did not vote for a strike before their leaders had asked them to vote, and so the trade union leaders' reasons for calling the strike must now be considered.

For the White mine workers who were British, or otherwise English speaking, (these included the great majority of trade union and Labour leaders), the cry of White South Africa in Danger was not so potent.[2] Coming from a tradition of workers fighting for a fair share of production, a fight which had been no less long, and no less bitter, than the Afrikaners' fight for racial supremacy, the British worker opposed the Black mainly as an economic competitor who could undercut White wages. Because of the raging depression of the post war years,[3] economic fears were quite as potent as racial fears. The White worker knew that if he lost employment on the mines, he would find it nowhere else, and there was no adequate social welfare to provide food and shelter for his family. Any newspaper showed long columns of "Situations Wanted" but only a few "Situations Vacant." The Statistics of the Johannesburg Inspector of White Labour told the same story of unemployment. At this time of severe depression it was dangerous for the Chamber of Mines to threaten the jobs of White workers on a large scale. No worker, however efficient, felt safe in his job, especially as the retrenchment of the 2,000 mine workers

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1* The Star 11.1.1922

2* Joe Thompson at Selborne Hall meeting The Star 17.1.1922 Trade union leaders often spoke calmly about "inexortable economic laws tending towards the elevation of the Kaffir socially and intellectually" (J. Jones, Engine Drivers' leader The Star 25.2.1922) See also Boydell, in Assembly, 21.2.1922. Hansard. G. Crisp, engineers' leader, to Krugersdorp meeting 17.2.22. (R.D. Mail 18.2.22.)

3* This depression had intensified just before the strike. In Nov.-Jan.1921-2, more bancrupcies came before the magistrates than during the preceeding 12 months (Court Records, Johannesburg Magistrate's Court)

was only the latest, if most severe, of a number of retrenchments and wage loweringa which had made the working class on the Rand jittery.

The British mine worker did not fear miscegination as the Afrikaner worker did. The Briton feared losing his well paid job because it would reduce him to a lower living standard: the Afrikaner feared unemployment because the lower living standard resulting would reduce him economically, and therefore eventually socially, to the level of the non-European. For Whites, a drop in the economic scale meant not only competition with Natives for employment, which was considered degrading, but social mixture with Non-Europeans, since South Africa had no White proletariat, but only a great Black proletariat into which White labourers, if they were paid labourers' wages, would have to fall. Had all White South Africa been threatened, the economic fact need not have had the social implication. But only 22,000 workers were involved, and might, in the heated imagination of the time, have had to end up in places like Pageview "living cheek by jowl in slums ... forced by poverty to herd with Negros"[2] and inevitably misseginate with the Blacks[3]. The only way to avoid misseginatior for poor, proud (and unskilled) Whites, was to artificially bolster up their wages. As there were no government undertakings prepared to absorb and pay the White flotsam, the burden fell, quite by accident after the World War, on the gold mines of the Rand. The mines found that they had to employ, for patriotic reasons, the thousands of White mine workers returning from the war.[4] Yet, because of pressures from the Nationalists and the trade unions, they could not retrench the still largely unskilled Afrikaners they had employed during the war. These sons of the veldt had

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1* In 1921 there were 120,000 poor Whites i.e. 8 per cent of the total white population of the Union (M.H. de Kock "Economic History of South Africa" page 163)
2* The Story of a Crime page 17.
3* Strike leader L. Pohl to Jeppe meeting The Star 20.1.22
4* The Chamber had virtually agreed not to retrench returned soldiers. ("Agreements and Recommendations" page 96. Groups 81/20, 16.6.1920, and Groups 84/20. 19.6.1920.

never taken kindly to working in the earth, and having not absorbed the responsibilities of trade unionism, they were sometimes a difficult group with little intelligence in their demands or enthusiasm in their work.[1*]

The mine managements wanted to replace the worst of these workers by the best of the Natives. But White mine workers had never become accustomed to Native competition in the semi-skilled occupations on the mines. When war conditions had led to infiltration of Natives into semi-skilled jobs, this fluidity of labour had been congealed by the Status Quo Agreement, which read: "Agreed between Chamber and unions that the status quo as existing on each mine with regard to the relative scope of employment of European and coloured employees should be maintained, that is to say, that no billets which are held by European workmen should be given to Coloured workmen, and vice versa."[2*] The Rand mines from that time resembled a patch work quilt, with Natives engaged in greasing and rough timbering in one mine, and Whites doing the same work in the neighbouring mine. The Status Quo Agreement came about as a result of pressure from the White trade unions. Now the Chamber of Mines wanted to remove the ~~Colo~~ Status Quo Agreement, which many White mine workers had come to identify with the Colour Bar. Thus there arose in the agitation a considerable concern with colour and race preservation for its own sake, the desire of Whites to remain White, and distinct from non-Whites.[3*] Cynics can no doubt find economic reasons beneath everything, but certainly the cry to keep South Africa White was older than the 1922 agitation, and the passions roused over Colour in 1922 spread to areas[4*] and to classes of people not directly affected economically by the outcome of the strike. These people, including many Nationalists, viewed the retrenchment of 2,000 White

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1* see Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa No.4 1921. page 578. And Social Statistics, No.4 1922 page 72.
2* "Agreements and Recommendations" page 106. Groups 71/18 24.9.18
3* The strikers' wives were particularly Colour conscious. See Rand Daily Mail 20.1.22, 2.2.22, 7.2.22, and The Star 21.2.22, 28.2.22, 5.3.22, for examples.
4* e.g. Volksrust, Muldersdrif, and many farmers and shopkeepers who gave in sympathy to strike relief funds.

mine workers rather as a victory of Black over White than as an economic struggle.[1*] Certain of the strike leaders saw little except Colour in the 1922 struggle,[2*] and many of the strikers indicated that they would rather see the whole gold mining industry at the bottom of the sea than that one White man should lose his job to a Black.[3*] On a visit to the Rand, General Hertzog got the impression that the fight was for the retention of the Colour Bar only.[4*]

It is impossible to say ultimately to what extent the agitation against the removal of the Status Quo, and the later violence, was caused by economic motives, or by a desire to defend White civilization from any attack.[5*] Since Colour sounded more idealistic, it rather than economic wants was thumped from the strikers' platforms:[6*] quotations prove little.[7*] Nor do the arguments which point out that there was no demand for higher wages during the strike on the part of the mine workers, but all the sacrifices were for the White brothers who were in danger of being discharged. In the circumstances of the lowering gold premium and the depression, it was an economic victory for the trade unions to stop any new attempt to reduce costs at the expense of workers. Security, not pay increases, was the desire of the workers, and the Status Quo agreement spelt a measure of security for all White workers. Many Afrikaner strikers were apparently genuine in their concern that White civilization in South Africa should be preserved intact,[8*] but the English-speaking trade union leaders showed that this was not their be-all: they were willing to put the matter of the Status Quo Agreement to Parliamentary arbitration, and,

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1* Tielman Roos at Germiston (Rand Daily Mail 23.1.22.)
2* Hendrikz, secretary of the Mine Workers Union, (Star 8.2.22)
3* M. Pretorius (R.D. Mail 24.2.22), S. Fourie (Sunday Times 1.3.22)
4* interview with De Volksblad 9.2.22
5* Madeley House of Assembly 22.2.22 Hansard.
6* e.g. Boksburg commando rally. (R.D. Mail 10.2.22). It may be remembered that only gold mine workers were concerned with colour. The other strikers were out for economic reasons.
7* A.E. Smith "The Shamer of Mines" page 14.
8* A number of Dutch Reformed predicants joined in the agitation and addressed meetings of strikers. e.g. Rev. Oosthuizen at Brakpan, Rev. Hattingh at Johannesburg Town Hall (Martial Law Inquiry UG 35-1922 para 97)

admittedly under pressure, they agreed to a Black-White ratio which implied a greater displacement of White workers than the "ultimatum" had demanded.[1*]

With economics as its father, and race purity as its possible mother, the Black Menace fear bound the English-speaking and Afrikaans mine workers together as nothing else could. Their leaders, however, were interested in power for trade unionism, in the struggle between capital and labour, and paid to Colour only that lip service which the allegience of the masses of workers required. The prominence given to Colour by trade union leaders was motivated not so much by a belief that White South Africa was in danger, as by a knowledge that White South Africa would support a race struggle more readily than it would support an economic struggle of the miners. Whites were apt to be philosophical about the financial difficulties of others, but they could be roused relatively easily by the cry of White South Africa in Danger[2*] - possibly because they feared that their own economic position would suffer ultimately. The strikers had plenty of evidence of this type of support,[3*] but they badly misjudged its nature, mistaking passive approval for the equilivant of potential militant help. General Smuts and the Chamber of Mines tried to avoid obstanacy arising out of vain hopes by repeatedly denying that White civilization was even remotely in danger. On 28.1.1922 Smuts emphasised to Parliament that "the Colour Bar is not in danger"[4*], and the Chamber of Mines declared its policy to be "no elimination of the Colour Bar."[5*] On 21.2.1922 Smuts told Parliament that "the entrenchment of the White position under the law shall not be touched".[6*]

1* Joe Thompson to Witbank meeting (The Star 13.2.1922)
2* Gen. Hertzog said that 90 per cent. of South Africa stood behind the miners on the Colour issue (R.D. Mail 22.2.1922)
3* B. Pool, e.g., told a Bloemfontein Trades Union Conference that the whole of Dutch South Africa would oppose "with rifles" any attempt to remove the Colour Bar. (Story of a Crime, page 23)
4* Rand Daily Mail 29.1.22 5* Sunday Times 30.1.22
6* The Story of a Crime, page 20. This assurance of Smuts was spoilt on the day following when elder S.A.P. statesman J.X. Merriman, said "We want to abolish the Colour Bar."

The trade union leaders, in appealing to the racial emotions of the workers by painting the Chamber of Mines as endangering White South Africa, and the magnates as being kaffir-boetjies, instead of presenting the strike as they saw it, as an £ s d affair, played a dangerous game which rebounded when the Chamber offered a compromise solution of the Status Quo deadlock. The trade unionists could not agree to a compromise because they had argued piously that no single White man should be sacked. The trade unionists recognised that many of the men whom the Chamber meant to retrench were redundant. Because of their insubordination and lack of skill, these men were equally a burden on trade unionism. What prevented the trade unionists joining forces with the Chamber to get rid of undesirables (many of whom had crept into the mines under cover of trade unionism) was the fear of the mass of strikers that the nullification of the Status Quo Agreement was an opening for Blacks to get into all branches of employment on the mines. The attitude of the Chamber, during the strike, in refusing to confirm even the huge White-Black ratio of 1-10.5, did nothing to settle this fear which careless talk by magnates had aroused.

Just how the abolition of the Status Quo Agreement (which directly affected only semi-skilled occupations) would enable the Natives to eventually take over even the skilled mine jobs was explained by the strike leaders. White youths became skilled workers by first gaining practical experience in semi-skilled jobs. If Whites were removed from semi-skilled jobs, and Natives replaced them, then the Blacks would inevitably succeed to the skilled jobs as well.

That argument depended for its strength on how many White semi-skilled workers were going to be removed, that is,

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1* Thompson (RD Mail 26.1.22), R. Tillett (The Star 12.1.22) etc.
2* Rex vs. J.J. Viljoen.
3* The Chamber spoke of "the fastening upon the (gold mining) industry of redundant persons who, having failed in other occupations, now seek to shelter behind the Status Quo Agreement" (A.C. Key "The Strike on the Goldfields of South Africa")
4* Thompson stated that it was not so much sympathy with the 2,000 whom the abolition of the S. Quo would throw out of work, but fear that that abolition would lead to further encroachments on the White employment field, which motivated the strike. (Rand Daily Mail 13.1.1922)
5* E.S. Magrath (RD Mail 11.1.1922)

what were the implications of the removal of the Status Quo Agreement. Did it, or did it not, mean the end of the Colour Bar on the mines? There was no proving either way, whether the Chamber was displacing the 2,000 semi-skilled White workers for pressing reasons of economy on the short term, or whether the immediate economic crisis was also an excuse to get rid of most of the expensive White workers in the long term by removing the Status Quo Agreement.[1]

There was a possibility in this fear of what the Chamber intended to do, or of what the magnates might be tempted to do should the Status Quo be annuled, which won to the side of the strike the more sober and moderate of the mine workers. These included those branches of mine workers whose relatively high wages kept them careful in industrial disputes, branches like the Engine Drivers and the Reduction Workers. Even the pro-capitalist Rand Daily Mail insisted that, with the increase of efficiency of the Native and his lower wage packet, the time might come when by degrees the White workers would be ousted from the mines to a very large extent.[2] Such a change-over might have occurred in the course of time and hardly been noticed, but the abruptness of the Chamber's notice that 2,000 White workers should be replaced within a month by Blacks, put every miner's back up.[3] And this tension was not relieved by demands that the Colour Bar should be removed, coming from such varied sources as the Umtata Chamber of Commerce,[4] and the Coloured people of Cape Town, headed by city councillor Dr. Abdurahman.[5]

This fear that the nullification of the Status Quo might eventually mean much more than the sacking of 2,000 Whites was real because: the Chamber of Mines directorate could not lay down policy for succeeding directorates, which meant that any guarantee that the Chamber offered that the proportion of

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1. 80 or 90 per cent. of White mine workers could theoretically be displaced if the Status Quo was annuled, said Wateraton. (Rand Daily Mail 26.1.1922)
2. editorial 27.1.1922
3. The Minister of the Interior told Parliament that this notice had been given "in a tactless and ill-advised way." 27.2.1922 Hansard
4. 10.1.1922 The Star.
5. 'Story of a Crime' page 46

Native workers to each White worker would not exceed 10.5 had no permanence (even before the Chamber refused to confirm this ratio[1]); the mines were organised on a federal system and the promises of the federal body, the Chamber of Mines, could not bind individual mining companies; most important, the Status Quo Agreement was the only real protection which the workers had against losing their jobs to Black labour by degrees.

The legal Colour Bar did not give a guarantee that more than a small fraction of those Whites working on the mines in 1922 would be retained, if the magnates demanded their full legal rights. The Colour Bar had never been meant as a measure to protect White labour, but merely to prevent mine accidents, and it consisted of nothing more than a series of regulations made by the government under the Mines and Works Act of 1911. These regulations provided that certain jobs, like conducting blasting operations, supervising mine proping and driving engines were excluded from the Natives' sphere of employment for reasons of general safety.[2]

Therefore the argument put forward by the government and the Chamber of Mines,[3] that the Status Quo Agreement was not the Colour Bar, was by no means completely true. The Chamber of Mines' chairman, Mr. Buckle, pointed out that the Status Quo Agreement had existed only since 1918, whereas there had been a division of work between European and non-European since the mines had begun.[4] He did not point out that, while the Mining Regulations might once have been thought sufficient to protect White workers in the occupancy of skilled and semi-skilled jobs, the experience of Black infiltration which had been the direct cause of the Status Quo Agreement had made it clear that the Mining Regulations alone were not sufficient to maintain a

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1* The workers opposed the "ratio" idea. (The Star, 1&2.22 and 23.2.22). In any case the 10.5 ratio meant more retrenchment of White miners than the "ultimatum" had demanded.

2* Smuts to Parliament Hansard 21.2.22,

3* Chamber of Mines Annual Report 1922, page 54. The implication that the Chamber did not wish to interfere with the Colour Bar was open to suspicion. (See De Volksblad 12.1.1922). Even mine managements thought that the Status Quo abolition would endanger the Colour Bar (Ann.gen. meeting of Mine Managers Assoc. 24.2.22)

4* A.C. Key op.cit.

Colour Bar.[1] The long tenure of Whites in the semi-skilled occupations had been unchallenged because gold mining prosperity had given shareholders high dividends without a change-over to cheap Native workers being necessary. It was due, too, to Native ignorance of skills, a state which experience was altering year by year. It was not due to the existance of a Colour Bar, since a Colour Bar did not exist in the semi-skilled occupations until the Status Quo Agreement was signed in 1918. Therefore there was validity in what labour leaders said - that the removal of the Status Quo meant the abolition of the Colour Bar, that in fact the Chamber was destroying the Colour Bar.[2] This of course laid the Chamber open to the suspicion of wanting to displace 12,000 or more White workers not protected by the Mining Regulations.[3] In any case it placed a power in the hands of the magnates which the circumstances of the time - suspicion, economic crisis, squabbles - made look ten times as lethal.

It was not just the motives of the Chamber of Mines that were feared, but the obviousness of the fact that Whites could not retain their jobs on the mines in the long run without a strong legal Colour Bar.[4] Without a Colour Bar, the White workers would eventually be at an impossible disadvantage, since their cost of living was so much higher than that of the Natives that they could not possibly compete in the open market for jobs.[5] That, at any rate, was the general belief.

The mine workers, then, had strong grounds for opposing the removal of the Status Quo Agreement. It was not merely the usual labour-capital struggle for an advantage, but a straightforward battle for survival - if the mine worker genuinely preferred to entrench his own survival in law rather than depend

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1. The previsions of Section 4 (i) and (ii) of the Mines and Works Act of 1911 denied the Governor General authority to discriminate between persons simply on account of their colour.
2. Boksburg recall resolution (R.D. Mail 24.1.22), Hendriks (R.D.M. 16.2.22), Thompson (Sunday Times 28.2.22) etc.etc.
3. Stewart M.L.A. in Assembly Hansard 21.2.22, Minister of Mines Malan to Parliament 24.2.22 Hansard. etc.etc.
4. The Chamber itself recognised this (R.D. Mail 26.1.22)
5. Benoni meeting (R.D.M. 24.1.22), Germiston meeting (R.D.M. 2.2.22) etc., etc.

on the goodwill of the Chamber of Mines and the sympathy of the government and people of South Africa. Such a way of thinking reasoned that if the Status Quo Agreement as such did not remain, then some new agreement (besides the Mining Regulations) had to take its place if the White workers were to feel secure in their jobs, and if the White workers-were traders and manufacturers who supplied the needs of White mine workers were to have security of tenure. After the strike began, even the Mining Regulations ceased to give much security to the miners, for the government allowed them to be breached by the mine managements in both the coal and gold mines to meet the emergency caused by the threat of the mines becoming flooded.[1*]

It is clear then that all the workers, not just the lazy or those who wanted trouble, had an interest in opposing the abolition of the Status Quo Agreement. This explains why so many otherwise respectable mine workers fought law and order in the closing days of the strike.[2*]

The abolition of the Status Quo Agreement was regarded by the trade unionists in so serious a light that they attempted to fight it by enlisting national support against the Chamber of Mines.[3*] Although the aims of the strike were by no means limited to the safeguard of White civilization, the trade unionists proclaimed that the Rand workers were fighting a national battle against Colour and Colour-blind capitalism, and that it was the duty of all White South Africans to assist either by demanding a Parliamentary settlement in the strikers' favour, or by refusing to aid the government should it actively side against the White Rand workers.[4*]

1* The Star 14.1.1922, 17.1.22.

2* Even so respectable a body as the Engine Drivers Association believed that the White workers were in danger because of the threat to annul the Status Quo, and that the government was doing nothing about it. (Meeting Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association R.D. Mail 14.2.1922.)

3* e.g. Jeppestown meeting. (The Star 12.1.22) The S.A.I.F. augmented executive sent out emissionaries to many parts of the Transvaal and the Free State to enlist national support. This matter is gone into in a later chapter.

4* These were the general themes taken by the emissionaries in their talks.

Unfortunately for the strikers, it was clear to everyone who believed that the strike was an economic struggle revolving round the Status Quo Agreement, that the future of South Africa did not depend, by any flight of the imagination, on the retension of that agreement. At most, its nullification would be a minor threat to the prosperity of White South Africa. As such people, who included the majority of the supporters of the ruling South African Party, saw the strike purely in terms of the immediate effects of the abolition of the Status Quo Agreement, the attempts of the workers' leaders to convince them that their fate was inextricably intertwined with that of the mine workers on the Witwatersrand failed to convince them.[1] They resisted this pressure,[2] believing that the miners were less concerned with White civilization than with their personal superior status as mine workers over Native labourers.[3]

But for those who believed that Natives getting a foothold in any "White" occupations was a national danger, there was some ground for the identification of South Africa with the mine workers' interests. Many Labourites and Nationalists belonged to this school of thought. Often enough Labourites expressed evident conviction that the interests of the mine workers and of the whole of White South Africa were one, and their appeals to the strikers to fight on for a White South Africa have the ring of sincerity.[4] The Nationalists, for their part, agreed that the strike was a national issue,[5] though perhaps they were not uninfluenced by the wish of their voters that well paid semi-skilled jobs on the mines should not seduce

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1. Col. F.H.P. Creswell (R.D. Mail 26.1.22), Joe Thompson (The Star 24.1.22), Hendriks (The Star 27.1.22) etc., etc.
2. This was proved conclusively by the lassitude of the country in doing anything constructive for the strikers.
3. The Cape Argus 13.2.22, The Friend 18.2.22.
4. J. Christie (later Labour Party leader) R.D. Mail 20.1.22, Madeley L.M.A. (R.D. Mail 6.2.22), Joe Thompson (The Star 13.2.22) etc. etc.
5. T. Roos (R.D. Mail 11.2.22), Transvaal National Party executive resolution 1.2.22. Reported in The Star of following day.

Native labour from the farms. But these Nationalists, who held that South Africa was involved in the strike, refused to support the strikers when they attempted to defeat the Chamber of Mines by setting up a republican government in Pretoria sympathetic to the strike cause. And later, when the extremist strikers used violence as a last resort to win the strike, the Nationalist leaders condemned some unconstitutional methods.

This appears to have led to a plot on the part of certain men to enlist the support of White South Africa for the strikers by counterfeiting a Black Rebellion.

At Pretoria on 9.3.22, the Minister of Justice, Mr. N.J. de Wet, and the Minister of Defence, Mr. H. Mentz, announced: "The Government has information that these deliberate and unprovoked attacks (by Whites on Natives which resulted in 16 killed, 55 wounded) are designed to stampede the coloured population and to give the impression throughout the country that a Native rising on the Witwatersrand is imminent and that the lives and property of Europeans are in danger."[1]

From March 8-10, gangs of Whites roamed the streets of the Rand towns, shooting and assaulting Natives, trapping them in backyards and in compounds.[2] Whether this was just hooliganism or hatred of the Native or panic, or whether it was part of a plot which would not have required much retaliation on the part of Natives to have succeeded, the writer cannot say. He has not available the evidence, if any, on which the two Ministers based their statement.[3]

Although unarmed and virtually unprotected in the midst of 20,000 strikers, the Natives did not stampede. By no means confident in the bewildering White man's world, they did not retaliate, and cases of Native aggression were so few as to make ridiculous the allegations that the Natives started the

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1. Martial Law Inquiry report para 283. (also para 64)
2. Fury against Natives had intensified since they had assisted in the re-opening of the gold mines (The Star 9.3.22)
3. The State Archives are closed for 1922 (see Preface)

trouble.[1] On March 8 attacks were made on Natives in Ferreira-town, Glen Deep, Rose Deep, Primrose, Johannesburg Municipal Compound, Jubilee Compound, Salisbury Compound and Vrededorp. Attacks continued on March 9, but then died out. Native and Coloured casualties in the disturbances were 152, including 24 killed.[2] Strike apologists afterwards claimed that the Whites involved in the attacks on Natives were not strikers,[3] but Thompson said that they were.[4] At the time no one, of course, took the murder of Natives terribly seriously, as Smuts ironically pointed out,[5] and there is no evidence about the whole affair, as far as the writer is aware, apart from the concentratedness of the March 8 attacks, which points to a plot, and the information which might be buried away in the State Archives.

It is most unlikely that all the assaults on Natives from March 8-10 were part of an organised plan. That hooligans, in a time of police impotence, would turn on Natives, who could be assaulted with little fear of retribution,[6] was very likely. But the outbreak seems to have been too sudden and too intensive to have been entirely sporadic.

The Natives living in the compounds kept calm largely because the Chamber of Mines had taken good care that they should not become agitated. Although there was no work for them when the strike began, they continued to receive their pay and food,[7] and no contracts were broken. In addition, Native leaders encouraged the Native mine workers to be orderly.[8]

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1. "The Story of a Crime" page 43. "Comrade Bill" pp 269-270.
2. Martial Law Inquiry report para 281.
3. "Comrade Bill" p 270. "The Shamer of Mines" p 42.
4. Rand Daily Mail 9.3.22. He was supposed to have been tricked into saying this by police chief Trigger (Comrade Bill) p. 271)
5. Smuts to House of Assembly 9.3.22 Hansard.
6. The fights in Vrededorp, Marshallstown and Ferriarastown, where White and Black lived cheek by jowl, were of this type, it appears.
7. The Star 12.1.22.
8. Message from chiefs in Transkei (The Star 9.3.22)

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Chapter III

The South African Party government, under the prime ministership of General J.C. Smuts, dealt with the 1922 labour agitation in a manner that drew criticism at the time and since. A normal assumption is that any government is primarily concerned with maintaining law and order. Yet Smuts told Parliament after the strike that on 17.2.22 (in the middle of the strike), he and his collegues "feared that for a couple of days we might lose control of the Rand, but that we decided to give the country an object lesson with reference to the subterranean menacing forces, even at the risk of a couple of days revolution in Johannesburg." The couple of days revolution duly obliged to teach Johannesburg and the country a lesson.

From the earliest days of the strike the government was accused of partisanship on the side of the Chamber of Mines. A reason for that was that in the post war years the government had given a lead as an employer of labour in wage reductions, "pulling down the standard of living," as the strikers put it.[2] Another reason was that the government allowed the Mining Regulations to be breached. This breach of the law was said to be necessary to save the mines from being flooded after the strikers had abandoned essential services,[3] but it was resented by those strikers who had abandoned the essential services expressly to force the Chamber of Mines to give way, by threatening the existance of the whole industry. The Central Strike Committee, Witbank, exasperated by the failure of its scheme, resolved that the working of the coal mines "under prevailing circumstances constitutes a wholesale breach of the Mines, Works and Machinery regulations, and that the absence of prosec-ution of the offenders gives reason to suspect connivance between the Government and the inspectorate."[4] The Government

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1. "The Story of a Crime" page 23. See also "Comrade Bill" p 275
2. Augmented Executive member Buxton,(The Star 16.1.22)
3. see be ow.
4. Published in Rand Daily Mail 25.1.22

mining engineer, Sir G.N. Kotze, replied that it was necessary for persons to travel the shaft to carry on essential services and safeguard the mines. Since the certificated engine drivers refused to hoist men for these purposes, recourse had to be had to such other persons as were able to drive hoisting engines.[1] Smuts later told Parliament that he had given no instructions that breaches of the Mining Regulations should be allowed on the coal mines.[2] Yet breaches there had been to such an extent that the collieries' production was only slightly cut by the strike.[3]

Next it was the gold mine employees who were complaining about non-certificated men lowering persons, contrary to the Mines and Machinery Regulations.[4] Kotze replied "On instructions from the Prime Minister ... it is necessary that persons should travel in shafts (to safeguard the mines) ... for the resumption of operations."[5] This continued breach of the Mining Regulations led strike leader Joe Thompson to epostulate that the Government was partisan, and that it must bear the consequences.[6] Smuts replied that the Colour Bar would remain untouched.[7]

Smuts was undoubtedly primarily concerned with ending the strike, which was holding up economic development in the country,[8] and endangering the national economy. The strike on the coal fields was stopping coal from reaching the coast and foreign ships were ceasing to call at Union ports to bunker. "They don't come now ... these men have for the present destroyed this industry," said Smuts wrathfully.[9] On the Rand, organ-

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1 * Rand Daily Mail 23.1.1922.
2 * ibid 22.2.1922.
3 * speaker at strikers' meeting at Witbank (The Star 28.2.22)
4 * Benoni Strike Committee. Reported (R.D. Mail 26.1.1922)
5 * Rand Daily Mail 26.1.1922. Smuts later admitted this to Parliament 21.2.22 Hansard.
6 * The Star 22.2.1922.
7 * To House of Assembly on 27.2.22 Hansard.
8 * e.g. the Middleburg electric lighting plant could not be erected (The Sunday Times 19.1.22). Revenue from gold and coal production was cut. (Government letter to Women's Active League
9 * In the House of Assembly 21.2.1922 Hansard.

isations of strikers, like the Essential Services Committee, were usurping powers which the State itself did not dare to discharge.[1]

And the Prime Minister blamed the strikers, not the Chamber of Mines, for the strike.[2] "The Federation of Trades[3] precipitated the strike when the Chamber of Mines gave the Status Quo another month without prejudice to the negotiations" Smuts told the House of Assembly.[4] The trade union leaders had refused to listen when Smuts begged them not to strike. "I appealed to them 'with my usual partiality'. I pointed out (that the strike) ... would not improve their position in any negotiation, and that it would make their position all the more difficult. I said 'Gentlemen, remember this: if you do not heed my advice, we are going to be impartial,... if you rush into this strike a month before it is necessary, you will find that the attitude of the Government will be one of severe impartiality."[5] This non-interventionist policy - except to appeal that the mines be re-opened, and to encourage scabbing by words and police protection - was adhered to by Smuts all during the strike, but unfortunately it led straight to violence. It might have been just, but it was not wise. When the strikers were exhausted and desperate in late February, Smuts refused to act on their behalf. "The Prime Minister has lost slight of the human element in the strike: the men cannot be expected to crawl back to work in the way the Prime Minister suggested," remarked a member in the House of Assembly.[6]

The manner in which the strikers mercilessly and venomously attacked Smuts did not endear them to him. The Prime Minister was accused of planning to remove the Colour Bar, and times innumerable of being the servant or partisan of the

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1 • De Burger 2.2.1922
2 • "No strike was necessary at all" he said to Parliament. 21.2.22. Hansard.
3 • ~~ibid~~ The S.A.I.F.'s old name.
4 • House of Assembly 21.2.22 Hansard.
5 • ibid
6 • House of Assembly. Dr. Visser L.M.A. 27.2.1922 Hansard.

Chamber of Mines.[1] He was accused of despicable behaviour,[2] of having betrayed the working class people who had voted for him in the last election,[3] of waiting vulture-like for the strikers to break out in honest indignation so that he could declare Martial Law and crush them,[4] of trying to engender racialism among the workers.[5] He was accused of planning to put down wages and replace white labour, if the strike was defeated.

Much of the mud stuck, and hatred of Smuts reached great depths. A Springs meeting protested against his acting as a pall bearer at Boer War General De Wet's funeral, "Smuts having betrayed the Whites ... for whom the deceased general gave his life."[6] The prejudice played a part in preventing the strike leaders calling in Smuts' aid before it was too late, before the government had committed itself to get the strike over first and make a settlement afterwards.

Few by comparison were the assurances of support and fidelity which Smuts received from the nation,[7] until matters on the Rand began to tend unmistakably towards violence and perhaps an outbreak of Bolshevism. Then the country came solidly behind the government of the day, Nationalist or "Sap", Boer farmer or British capitalist,[8] were all one in opposition to anarchy. The rapid recruitment of the Citizen Force units from the towns, and the speedy assemblying of government commandos in the platteland, proved this beyond doubt.

Once the strike got under way, the English medium Press soon began to find fault with the tardiness of the government. When a State spokesman pointed out statistically the necessity of saving the low grade mines, the Cape Times commented: "The pity is that the irrefutable statement was not made on the authority of the government weeks ago. However, better late

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1 * De Volksblad 18.1.1922. Strike leaders Hendrikz (13.2.22), Walker (13.2.22) Both in R.D. Mail. And see also The Star 27.1.22, 2.2.22, etc.etc.

2 * J. Matthews (R.D. Mail 12.1.22)

3 * The Star 17.1.22.

4 * Hendrikz (R.D. Mail 19.1.22) The Government denied this / (R.D.Mail 31.1.22)

5 * The Star 9.2.1922

6 * Instances were the B.R.S.L. in Potchefstroom offering to preserve law on the Rand - on the first day of the strike (R.D. Mail 12.1.22) and the Congress of East Griqualand Farmers expressing "full confidence in the govt." (R.D.Mail 16.1.22)

than never..."[1] The Labour Party, which wanted the government to act on behalf of the strikers, called the ministry "inert".[2]

Sir Abe Bailey excused his political leader. "Whatever the government did, the Nationalists would have said that it was under the thumb of the Chamber of Mines so the government kept quiet and the strike had to settle down to a strike of exhaustion ... General Smuts had demoralised the strategy of the Nationalists by "taking no public action and quietly ignoring the hot air blown off by the Market Square orators."[3]

Smuts was unwilling to do anything forceful to end the strike. He had an unfortunate reputation for strong arm tactics[4] Twice in ten years he had caused Martial Law to be proclaimed on the Rand, and twice he had had to ask Parliament to pass Indemnity Acts. It is reasonable to assume that he shrunk from a repeat of that experience. Once he had raised a storm by illegally deporting seven strike leaders. He would much rather that the present strike settled itself.

Thus in the earlier stages of the strike Smuts was unwilling to do anything but make appeals and try to bring the opposing parties together as a go-between. He would rather be a referee than an arbitrator. "I said to them (the disputants) 'We shall draw a ring; we shall preserve law and order and shall allow the disputants to fight it out within the ring.'"[5]

Eventually, however, Smuts could not help taking sides. He wanted the gold mining industry to run at its greatest quantative output, because his concern was with the economy of South Africa as a whole. He was bound to back the side in the strike which was fighting to keep the gold mines running at their greatest quantative output, and that side was not the

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1. Cape Times 29.1.1922
2. Col. Creswell The Star 18.2.1922
3. The Friend 4.2.22.
4. He was already known as "Grey Steel" and "The Butcher of Bulhoek." Smuts leant over backwards to stop the strikers becoming exasperated. When the Kleinfontein Mine decided to restart its power station, he requested it to pospone "lighting the fires .. to avoid provocation which might prejudice negotiations" (The Star 6.2.1922)
5. Smuts to House ofAssembly 21.2.1922 Hansard.

trade unions. Having no highly developed economic policy of his own, Smuts relied on big business to keep up national employment and production.[1] In addition, his experiences with Rand workers did not make him sympathetic towards them, or make him believe that they would contribute to national prosperity if they got an initiative over the Chamber of Mines.[2]

In any case, it was not easy for General Smuts to take an active or deciding part in the strike during its earlier stages. Both sides were unwilling to give way an iota, and as neither violence nor economic confusion (though there were plenty of rumours of both) immediately resulted, the government had no grounds, justifiable to public opinion at any rate, on which to intervene. The government confined itself to offering arbitration and advice.

On the day on which the gold mines strike started, the S.A.I.F. wrote to Smuts asking him to call a joint meeting of employers concerned and the S.A.I.F. for the purpose of discussing the dispute. The S.A.I.F. gave the basis on which the strikers were prepared to discuss a settlement with the employers, and these terms were nothing short of a demand for complete capitulation by the Chamber of Mines.[3] Smuts refused, but instead arranged the Curlewis Conference (discussed later) which proved conclusively that, unless the government exerted pressure on one or other party, neither side would give away enough of its demands to make a settlement possible.

With the failure of the Curlewis Conference, the demands by individual Rand meetings that the government should intervene to end the strike, grew louder.[4] But what could the government do? The Rand Daily Mail sympathised: "The government cannot compel the miners to work on the mines. It cannot force the

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1* The strikers had recently rejected his suggestions, never mind his intervention. Smuts to Assembly. (R.D.Mail 21.2.1922).
2* The assaults committed on a large scale from 21.2.22 did not endear the strikers to the government. Smuts to Assembly 23.2.22
3* Federation's letter to Smuts. Published The Star 11.1.1922.
4* Suggestions that government should impose arbitration: Germiston meeting (The Star 26.1.22). Benoni meeting (The Star 29.1.22) Middelburg (R.D.Mail 26.1.22) and the church (R.D.Mail 2.2.22) thought government should intervene. etc., etc.

companies to run at a loss, and it cannot make them carry on operations upon a basis not provided for in the regulations laid down by law."[1] What the government could do legally, it had done. It had persuaded, argued, reasoned, and had even postponed the opening of Parliament in order that ministers might be able available in the Transvaal to bring about a settlement if asked to do so by both parties in the strike.[2]

Many strikers were of the opinion that Parliament, which previous to the strike had been prorogued until February 17, should be called immediately to rush through legislation which would end the strike.[2a] Resolutions were passed by Rand meetings that Parliament should be called together immediately to discuss the industrial position. The Prime Minister, however, refused to advise the Governor General to convoke an early Parliament, claiming that it was the duty of the government to remain "on the spot" while the grave crisis was on. Were the government to go to Cape Town as at present it would deprive itself of all power to influence the situation or to be helpful at the right moment which, he said, he trusted would come "very soon."[3]

Immediately Parliament was in session on February 17, all talk centred on the strike situation. A full dress debate on the crisis got under way immediately. Although the House was sympathetic towards the strikers, "all proposals ... have it in common that the judgement (of a court of arbitration) must be retrospective"[4], i.e. the men must not lose by going immediately to work and putting their case to arbitration, yet it was clear from the beginning that the policy of the Prime Minister would be endorsed. By 69 votes to 54, the Assembly accepted Smuts'

1* Rand Daily Mail 19.1.1922. But De Burger (3.2.22) and The Friend (4.2.22) disagreed.
2* The Star 20.1.1922.
2a* Oddfellows Hall (The Star 20.1.22), Springs Masonic Hall (The Star 20.1.22) Fordsburg Market Square (R.D. Mail 27.1.22) etc.
3* Rand Daily Mail 30.1.22
4* ibid 25.2.22 Political correspondent.

course of advising all men to resume work on the best terms obtainable, with the promise of a board of enquiry into the strike.[1]

Perhaps sensing this outcome, certain strike leaders were considering less constitutional methods than an appeal to Parliament. Early in February rumours and evidences of an intended revolution spread around the Rand. A new cry for government intervention went up, especially as sporadic violence increased.[2] Yet what form should government intervention take? Arbitration had had an unsuccessful history in mining disputes,[3] and at this stage would have had to have been forced on the strikers. The government refused to force a decision. It had tried to bring the parties together and to cause them to arrive at an agreement. The government could do no more, said Smuts.[4] To a South African Party deputation from the Rand, Smuts explained that the government had no compulsory powers whereby to end the strike.[5] As the majority party in Parliament, the government could pass legislation if it considered that special measures were necessary to protect the White workers on the gold mines.[6] But legislation was too slow a process to be regarded as a solution to the strike which would be decided one way or another before long.[7]

Smuts could have taken emergency measures to help the strikers, and had them ratified afterwards by Parliament, but as he agreed with the Chamber of Mines that the Status Quo Agreement was an impediment to the prosperity of the gold mining industry, he would hardly do that. Some considerable measure of relief for the mines in the way of reduced running expenses was needed if they were to remain the main support of

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1. House of Assembly 28.2.1922 Hansard.
2. Witbank resolution (The Star 9.2.22) Mechanics' leader S. Cuthbert (R.D.Mail 6.2.22). Rand Daily Mail leader 4.2.22. Even the Transvaal Municipal Association executive suggested that the government should impose arbitration (The Star 13.2.22)
3. Chamber of Mines spokesman. R.D.Mail 6.2.22
4. Cape Times 10.2.22
5. ibid
6. The Friend 15.2.22
7. As Smuts pointed out in Parliament 168 17.2.1922 Hansard.

the South African economy[1], he believed, and the modification of the Status Quo Agreement was necessary to keep the mines in full production.[2] Although this meant the replacement of several thousand Whites by coloured workers, he did not believe that that meant the destruction of the Colour Bar. On the evidence of his past record, Smuts clearly supported the principle of a White South Africa.[3] But to Smuts the smooth running of the gold mining industry was more important than any breach of the Colour Bar which anyhow could be mended again by legislation once the mines were in full production. The immediate and therefore the only problem was the saving of the low grade mines. Smuts wrote: "The issue is not about the Colour Bar, but how to save the low grade mines - which means more than half the mining industry - from early extinction."[4] Smuts did not think that the strikers, despite all their talk, were chiefly concerned about the Colour Bar either.[5] He thought that they were preoccupied with keeping their jobs. Smuts was not the sort of man to whom Colour by itself could mean anything.

To the strikers who did not think, like Smuts, in terms of national economy and prosperity, the government appeared to be betraying the White man.[6] Strikers interpreted his actions as a desire "to bring their men folk down to the level of the Kaffir and the Coloured man and make them work for 7s.6d. a day," as a member of the Women's Active League in Krugersdorp expressed it.[7] This was an unjust summary of the Prime Minister's actions nevertheless. He went a long way towards meeting the strikers' demands when he persuaded the mine owners to retain the Status Quo Agreement on the high grade mines until a

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1* The Low Grade Mines Commission, which was signed, amongst others, "by the present secretary of the Federation of Trades" had convinced him of this. (Smuts telegram to S.A.I.F. 26.1.22)
2* He hoped that the proposed changes would lead to a great expansion of production. (House of Assembly, 24.2.1922 Hansard)
3* He was no party to any attack on the Colour Bar, he said (The Star 14.1.22)
4* telegram quoted in R.D.Mail 28.1.22
5* House of Assembly 21.2.22 Hansard
6* Benoni meeting (The Star 11.2.22), M. Kentridge (The Star 3.2.22) etc
7* Rand Daily Mail 15.2.22

Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry decided on an ultimate settlement. This meant a 50 per cent. backdown by the Chamber of Mines,*1 and a similar compromise by the S.A.I.F. in connection with the low grade mines might have ended the strike. But for a number of reasons which are dealt with later, the strike leaders refused to compromise at all. After that, the government*2 was reluctant to again try to help the strikers. This was not the first concrete government gesture to the strikers either. On 6.2.22 Smuts had suggested that the men return to work on the best terms they could get, but terms which would be "subject to modification and readjustment in the final settlement" by the government on the report of a government-appointed "impartial board to enquire and report as soon as possible." If "the findings prove fair and workable" a "ballot (would be) taken on the ... terms of settlement, among the men if necessary."*3 Here was an offer of government help for the strikers, and protection against the Chamber of Mines, while still allowing them a say in the final settlement. A few days later Smuts explicitly added that the sacrifices to be made to "save a large part of the mining industry from extinction" would be made "not only by the men, but also by the mine owners."*4 He went on to promise that precautions would be taken to prevent high grade mines being moved into the low grade category, while they were still high grade. He declared that work would be found by the government in afforestation and public works for those strikers who could not be immediately re-employed by the mines.*5

All these offers were refused by the strikers, and it seemed that no concessions would be sufficient to appease the

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1* A Chamber of Mines spokesman said: "Would any other industry have been prepared to make such sacrifices for the good of the country and the community?" (The Star 7.2.1922)
2* Smuts commented: "I do not think that better terms ... can be received than those I advised the Federation to accept." (R.D. Mail 13.2.22)
3* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
4* ibid 10.2.1922
5* ibid

extremists among the strikers who were no longer fighting for survival but for a workers' utopia.

After Smuts had failed to end the strike by these approaches to the strikers, he made a complete about turn, and tried to end the strike by doing everything that was legally possible to undermine the position of the strikers and smash their unity.

On 13.2.1922 General Smuts issued a momentous statement: "It is clear that the continuance of this unhappy state of affairs cannot be tolerated any longer," he began.[1] Then (a) he asked the mine owners to re-open the gold mines as soon as possible and re-employ any scabs who presented themselves (b) he ordered the police to protect scabs from interference by strikers, and arrest pickets of strikers who stood on the outskirts of mine properties discouraging others from strike-breaking.[2]

Smuts was as much attacked for this attempt to end the strike as he had been for his previous refusal to act decisively.[3] His action could be interpreted as the only possible solution to the strike after the strikers had refused to make any compromise despite his best attempts to meet them. On the other hand, it was alleged that his previous approaches to the strikers had been so much soft soap to make them swallow this nasty pill.[4] Smuts had been in the middle for some weeks. He said that the Chamber of Mines thought he sided with the men and the men thought that he sided with the Chamber. "The position is very difficult."[5] Now he had come down from the fence: "The government will use all its powers to protect those who listen to this appeal, and the police have instructions, as from 13.2.1922, to give protection to all miners who return to their former employment, and I call upon the mine owners to

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1* Rand Daily Mail 18.2.1922
2* ibid
3* Striker J.T. Neill: "The government in trying to get the men back to work deserves to be horsewhipped by the whole of the people of South Africa." (The Star 18.2.1922). Augmented Executive member Wyeth "Any man who expects sympathy from the government is a clown." (R.D.Mail 20.2.22) etc etc.
4* The International 18.2.1922.
5* Rand Daily Mail 10.2.22

re-start the mines in all cases where sufficient numbers of men offer to return to work."[1*]

The S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive hastily called a special meeting of all the executives of all the unions affiliated to the S.A.I.F. who were available. Smuts' decision was rejected, and he was regarded as having finally shown his real face as an enemy of the workers.[2*] Mass meetings of strikers revolved to ignore the appeal made by the Prime Minister that they should return to work.[3*] A Union Ground, Johannesburg, mass meeting deprecated "the action of the Prime Minister in his endeavour to undermine the workers of South Africa by affording protection to scabs."[4*]

The mine owners, while saying for the record that "the Chamber of Mines never wished to run the industry under such conditions"[5*] but it was its duty, showed considerable alacrity in re-opening the mines. The police effectively cleared all pickets from the outskirts of mine properties, and arrested some score of strikers in a big swoop on 18.2.22. But the strikers, except for a very small minority, refused to scab.

Despite the failure of his appeal, Smuts refused to change his tactics again. To Madeley's question in Assembly, as to the terms on which the mine workers should go back, Smuts replied: "On the Chamber's terms. On any terms. Their case will not be compromised because Parliament will finally settle it."[6*] But the strikers heard only: "On the Chamber's terms. On any terms." The Prime Minister, coldly logical, coldly just, had totally lost touch with the enflamed, impassioned Rand.[7*] Smuts remained adamant in his policy to protect scabs, and he increased the

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1* Prime Minister's statement. Rand Daily Mail 18.2.1922
2* Executives' resolution. The Star 13.2.1922.
3* Opollo Theatre, Germiston. (R.D.Mail 15.2.22) Women's active league rally (R.D.Mail 15.2.22) etc., etc.
4* Rand Daily Mail 16.2.1922
5* ibid 18.2.1922
6* ibid
7* Thompson attributed the increase of violence in later February to Smuts' re-opening of the mines and protection of scabs. (R.D. Mail 22.2.22), So did Boydell (House of Assembly 1.2.22 Hansard) But perhaps the trouble was that Smuts was unable to provide sufficient police protection in time.

police protection for those whom he had come to call "workers - peaceful workers." He added: "The government is determined to carry out the policy ... to give proper protection to those who wish to return to work."[1] The mine managements co-operated by arranging accommodation on mine property for those returning to work,[2] so that they would not have to run the gauntlet of the strikers between each shift.

Discussion on what should be done to end the strike continued in Parliament, but the state policy was a foregone conclusion.[3] "The Government cannot be shaken on the strike issue." Smuts, speaking to the House of Assembly, showed plainly that the government meant to do nothing further[4] but wait for the strike to be settled by scabbing, exhaustion or violence, which would necessitate the declaration of Martial Law.

This governmental policy to make no further approaches to the strikers, or on behalf of the strikers, came at a time when the trade unionist leaders were realising ever more clearly that they were losing the strike, and that either violence, or abject surrender to the Chamber of Mines would result unless the government intervened. "In strike circles it is suggested that the government should pass a one-clause Bill under which the State would take over the industry until a report is submitted by a commission to be appointed."[5] Smuts not only refused to take over the gold mining industry, but he demanded an unconditional return to work by the strikers as a prerequisite to a Parliamentary settlement.[6] He saw no alternative. "Both bodies ... have failed to assist the government," he told the House of Assembly, "and, under the circumstances, the government has not yet taken action."

But the strike leaders persisted. Smuts was directly asked

1* House of Assembly 23.2.1922 Hansard.
2* Minister of Mines in House of Assembly 24.2.22. Hansard.
3* Rand Daily Mail, 23.2.22. Political correspondent.
4* House of Assembly 22.2.22. Hansard.
5* Rand Daily Mail 17.2.22
6* He argued that it was a necessary condition for a Board of Inquiry to be successful.(House of Assembly 24.2.22 Hansard)

to stop the importing of scabs by the Chamber of Mines from other parts of South Africa by the chief of the S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive.[1] In Assembly Labour member Wateraton suggested that there were other ways of stopping the strike besides encouraging and protecting scabbing. "If the Prime Minister would only bring the same pressure to bear on the Chamber of Mines as he has done to the workers, if he would appeal to the Chamber of Mines to do the big and right thing, he could have the strike settled tomorrow."[2] Boydell eloquently continued on this theme.[3]

But Smuts did nothing but give the returned workers the protection they were entitled to under the common law. This became more and more difficult. February turned into March, while the tempreture on the Rand soared to bursting point. Boydell appealed in Assembly: "Has the Prime Minister nothing to give the House? Is he merely going to rely on the machine gun?"[4] The attitude of the Prime Minister would accentuate the trouble, he argued.

The strikers' position was becoming obviously desparate and hopeless without government intervention. Joe Thompson pleaded with his strikers to stand together "and the time will be short when the Prime Minister and the government will come to a more reasonable frame of mind and say "This thing in the interests of South Africa must cease.'"[5]

But the government refused to oblige and take the decision and responsibility of the strike out of the now near powerless hands of Thompson and his Augmented Executive. The strike organisation was falling to pieces, but still Smuts did not act. With the general public becoming ever more questioning and meetings continually calling on the government to intervene,[6]

1• Thompson at great Germiston demonstration. R.D.Mail 28.2.22
2• House of Assembly 23.2.22 Hansard.
3• House of Assembly 2.2.22 Hansard. Boydell later told Smuts to "dictate" terms of mutual concession to both sides. Smuts replied that he wished he could.(House of Assembly 8.3.22.)
4• House of Assembly 1.3.22 Hansard
5• Brakpan meeting (The Star 4.3.1922)
6• Brakpan meeting of 3,000 "calls upon the government to take immediate steps to force the employers to adopt a reasonable attitude." (The Star 7.3.23) etc.etc.

the Rand Daily Mail again rushed to the Prime Minister's defence. The government "cannot compel the strikers to go back to work. It cannot throw the mine-owners into prison unless they undertake to run the mines on pre-strike conditions and pay the losses out of their own pockets."[1*]

By 8.3.1922, the agony of slow waiting for widespread violence and lawlessness was so painful that any solution was welcomed by the mass of people on the Rand.[2*] Everybody was asking "Why doesn't the Government proclaim Martial Law?"[3*] Natives were being shot in the streets, mobs of hooligans were roaming the centre of Johannesburg, and business and industrial life was at a standstill. The persecuted Natives demanded Martial Law "or arms for Natives for protection."[4*]

Smuts ha[illegible]tained a serene view throughout, for the prospect of violence never troubled him unduly, and he sometimes welcomed it as a solution. "We are simply passing through an acute stage," he said at the Rosebank Agricultural Show, Cape Town, on 31.2.1922. "When we are through with these troubles we shall have a more prosperous mining industry and a more prosperous agricultural industry. That is the prospect I keep before me."[5*] South Africa, he said, had an interlocking of industries, and if one suffered, others suffered too. That was why he could not afford to consider the complaints of the strikers, that was why he could not side with a group who could not ensure the survival of the gold mining industry, on which the other great prop of the South African economy, agriculture, so largely depended.

The strikers might have been less aggravated by the government's protests that it could not intervene, had not the state and the police not at this time been involved in an incident

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1* Rand Daily Mail 9.3.22
2* The Star 8.3.1922
3* The Star 9.3.1922
4* ibid
5* Cape Times 1.3.1922

which the strike side considered was a hostile action. The Johannesburg Power House was taken over the by the government on 27.2.1922, and the municipal power house workers, members of the S.A.I.F. but not on strike, were expelled. Again, the state argued that it was stepping in to keep essential services going.[1*] The Johannesburg Council's Tramways and Lighting Committee had suddenly decided to use so-called scab coal at the Power House, which decision forced the Power House employees, as trade unionists, to down tools. With widespread violence approaching fast, Johannesburg could not be without lighting, never mind transport, water and meat. Simultaneously with the Tramways and Lighting Committee's decision, the government sent armed troops of police to the Power House to prevent any destruction of machinery by the workers. The police marched into the Power House yard with fixed bayonets and immediately evicted the startled employees.[2*] The strikers thereupon accused the government of being an accomplice in what they considered had been a doublecross by the Tramways and Lighting Committee on the S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive.[3*] With some justification, the strikers refused to believe that it was just a matter of keeping essential services going, but suspected it as being another trick to weaken the workers, by taking over the trump card of the S.A.I.F. in negotiation - the threat to stop Johannesburg's power by ordering a strike at the town's Power House.

In early March it was plain that a most undesirable development was occurring in the strikers' ranks: extremists were wrestling control from the trade unionists. While actual organised violence had not yet taken place, Smuts refused to get mixed up in their struggle. "The position is perfectly clear, that it is the duty of the government and of the House supporting the government to see that law and order are maintained,"

1* The Star 28.2.22
2* Rand Daily Mail 28.2.1922
3* Col. Creswell argued that if the government was so concerned about keeping essential services going, why had it allowed the mine magnates from closing so many mines in the past. (Brakpan meeting 3.3.22 (R.D.Mail 4.3.22)

Smuts said to Parliament.[1] He suspected a revolution to be imminent, and yet "it would be most improper for us on the facts as we know them to institute an enquiry ... I think we should let things develop."[2]

The Nationalist and Labour benches howled with laughter, because on 2.3.1922 it was clear to them that there would be widespread violence if things were left to develop. Smuts answered the derision: "Let us remain perfectly calm. There is no reason to get excited at all."[3] Perhaps he retained his wish to give the Rand a taste of revolt, although he piously declared: "We do not want to get in a revolutionary state in South Africa, which would be a far greater calamity than the strike which is ... in existance."[4]

The Minister of Mines explained that what Smuts meant when he said that Parliament should let things develop was "that they must wait until they could see more clearly what they could do at present."[5] But Smuts and Parliament were both caught off guard by the rapidity with which lawlessness developed.[6] The Prime Minister had not counted on the Chamber of Mines insulting letter to the S.A.I.F., refusing to recognise that body any further or to waste its time by talking again to its members. Smuts quickly realised how inflamatory that letter was, and what the consequences would be of the general strike which the letter played such a big part in causing. "I thought things were going well, and then this sudden change set in, which has worsened the position."[7] Still unwilling to intervene, however, he hoped "that the good sense of the country will confine the effect of that (general) strike to the area which has been affected so far."[8] The police were

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1* House of Assembly 1.3.22 Hansard.
2* ibid
3* ibid
4* ibid
5* ibid
6* Rand Daily Mail 9.3.1922. Political correspondent's view.
7* House of Assembly 7.3.1922 Hansard
8* ibid

clearly inadequate to keep order at this stage and on 8.3.22 five units of the Active Citizen Force were called up by command of the Governor-General-in-Council.[1*] But even this measure was insufficient. Only Martial Law could arrest the spate of murders of Natives which continued from March 7 to the night of March 9. The S.A. Party's members of Parliament became exasperated at the Prime Minister's refusal to apply Martial Law and stop the anarchy on the Rand,[2*] where murderers laughed at the police and honest men hid behind bars and bolts. Something had to be done.[3*] "A movement has got afoot among members with a view of gingering up the Government to firmer action. I believe the Reef will very shortly have evidence that this movement has achieved its object."[4*] wrote the Rand Daily Mail political correspondent from Cape Town on the night of 9.3.22. He was right. At 10 a.m. on 10.3.1922 Martial Law was declared on the Rand - too late, because before dawn on that day an organised revolt had got under way in Johannesburg, all along the East Rand, and as far west as Florida. Police were besieged in their stations, and for two days the rebels controlled most of the Reef. Martial Law earlier might have prevented the outbreak by making impossible the organisation and meeting together of the strikers' striking force, the commandos.[5*]

Smuts appears to have wanted a solution either without bloodshed, or he had wanted the strikers to act first so that, in declaring Martial Law, he could not be accused of starting the bloodshed. He therefore delayed the declaration, hoping still on 9.3.1922 that the worst had passed.[6*]

On the night before the Rand went up in revolt Smuts

1* Transvaal Horse Artillery, Transvaal Scottish, Imperial Light Horse, Pretoria Regiment and First Field Ambulance.
2* Cape Times 10.3.1922.
3* "The government cannot allow helpless natives to be massacred." (The Star 10.3.1922)
4* Rand Daily Mail 10.3.1922
5* The Friend 13.2.1922
6* Smuts to House of Assembly 9.3.1922 Hansard

revealed that he was confused and baffled by the situation. He told the House of Assembly: "The police say that they have control of the situation (after two days of almost unhindered murdering) but I am not quite clear that the time is not coming when the government will have to take more drastic steps. Unless there is a definate improvement almost immediately the government will be compelled most reluctantly to take additional measures ... I think the workers themselves will cordially welcome such a step." His speech continued to evince hesitation. "I do not say we shall; I hope it may not be necessary, but hon. members who have watched these things in the country before know how dangerous it is to allow a situation of this kind to drift and drift to a fatal position which may cause bloodshed and misery (which it was already doing) and I think the best course for the government will be to take steps to maintain law and order (as if that could be doubted) ... if the situation drifts to a more desperate one than it has been during the last few days it may be the duty of the government to take far more drastic steps than they have done so far."[1*]

At this time, except for certain trains allowed to run by permission of the Fordsburg commando, rail communications between Johannesburg and the rest of the country had ceased. As Johannesburg got its food mainly by rail, this could not be allowed to continue. The railwaymen had been intimidated into stopping work.[2*] Bodies of Johannesburg citizens were planning self defence because the state was not protecting them.[3*] As far south as Vereeniging industry was at a standstill. On the Rand laundries, shops, cafes and businesses were forceably closed. The Rand was falling apart administratively while Smuts fiddled in Parliament where appeals for the subjection of murderous hooliganism came from all sides.[4*]

1* Smuts to House of Assembly 9.3.1922 Hansard
2* Rand Daily Mail 10.3.1922
3* ibid
4* Boydell, Merriman, W. Stuart (Tembuland). 9.3.1922 Hansard.

Smuts replied: "The government ... has dealt with the situation with extreme patience and forbearance. I think the only blame that can be cast on the government is that it has been too patient."[1] Perhaps he was right.

Besides Smuts and the S.A.P. government, other politicians participated actively in the strike and influenced its course. They were members of the Nationalist and Labour parties.[3] These politicians supported the strike cause, but it was only with some reluctance that trade unionism accepted their help, since that help carried with it certain disadvantages.

The trade unionists who started the strike were trying to win an industrial dispute by trade union means.[2] Accepting the offered political assistance from certain politicians of the Nationalist Party, and all the members of the Labour Party,[3] meant turning an industrial dispute into a political struggle. People who sympathised with the working man's troubles would think twice about supporting the allies of the Nationalist and Labour politicians. The identification of the trade union cause with the Opposition parties lost the strikers much S.A.P. support, and after all this was the majority party, and the government. The government in any case could not very well help the trade unionists if they allied themselves with prominent politicians of the Opposition parties.

These disadvantages might have been compensated for had the political friends of the strikers been in a position to really help them. But they were not. Their assistance gave the trade unionists unfounded confidence and encouraged them to hold out for total victory.[4] But when a minority of strikers

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1* House of Assembly 9.3.1922 Hansard.

3* On 14.1.22 the National Council of the S.A.Labour Party called a meeting. A motion "That we, the S.A.Labour Party, declare ourselves to be wholeheartedly in sympathy with the actions taken by the S.A.I.F. ... and pledge ourselves to give every assistance" was passed. (Minutes book. S.A.Labour Party offices) On 12.2.22 the Labour Parliamentarians as a body assured the S.A.I.F. of the "hearty co-operation of the Labour Party." (R.D.Mail 13.2.22)

4* Smuts deplored this (House of Assembly 21.2.22 Hansard) The Friend held that the strikers' confidence in the Nationalists stopped them from accepting Smuts' offer to arbitrate which might have save them (editorial 6.2.22)

started using violence, the Nationalist politicians ceased to give the trade unionists effective help, and the Augmented Executive found itself sitting on the shelf, with its chances of a good settlement gone, and dreary defeat looming up with seeming inevitabity.

Nationalist politicians did not of course mean to betray the trade unionists, and do them much more harm than good in the long run. They were the genuine friends of the strikers. The Nationalists were pulled very strongly by the fact that the majority of the strikers were of the same blood as themselves.[1*] But these politicians gave the impression that they had the support of the National Party behind them to a much greater extent than was the case. In their oratorical moments politicians like Tielman Roos seem to have forgotten that what for them was largely a political platform campaign,[2*] was for their audiences of strikers a life or death struggle. They stirred up the strikers against Smuts without considering how much the strikers needed the Prime Minister's help.[3*]

There was a great temptation for the politicians to "cash in"[4*] on the labour agitation. Both Nationalists and Labourites could hope to win votes[5*] from the bitterness which was engendered by the association of the S.A.P. government and the Chamber of Mines. This association, which was forced on the government for reasons of national economics, was exposed as clearly as possible by the Opposition politicians. It appeared shrewd politics to keep the strike issue burning bright, because the longer it lasted, the more the S.A.P. would suffer. The S.A.P. government could not side with the Chamber of Mines without offending the workers, nor with the workers without offending the employing interests. It could not remain neutral without

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1* When the names of three strikers killed by the police were read out in Parliament, the Nationalist benches spontaneously cried out: "All Afrikaners!" (House of Assembly 3.2.22 Hansard)
2* e.g. Roos said that the government was waiting its chance to crush the strikers. (The Star 23.1.22)
3* The Cape Times 1.3.1922
4* Sir Abe Bailey argued along this line (R.D.Mail 21.1.22)
5* By pointing out that only a different government, a sympathetic government i.e. the Nationalists, would bring workers security and good conditions (R.D.Mail 3.2.22)

offending the public who believed that the government should somehow mend this strike mess. Some politicians were guilty of stoking the fire until things got too hot,[1] until extremist strikers showed that they would stop at nothing to win, not even at a revolt to get a republic friendly to workers. In justice it may be said that in January, 1922, when most of the speeches were made no one would have dreamt of a large scale revolt, and that, throughout, the Nationalists made it very clear that they would not support unconstitutional methods. As Thompson emphasised after the strike, the Nationalists kept their promises. As promised, they gave the strikers moral support, and foodstuffs. They had made plain at a meeting of the National Party in the Transvaal on 10.2.22 that "support would be withheld if any disturbances arose."[2]

All this does not mean that the strikers were a bunch of sheep led astray by politicians.[3] Many of the strikers needed no encouragement to make the strike a political issue. A good number of the English-speaking strikers were Labour Party supporters, while the Afrikaner strikers supported the party of their people. The trade unionists themselves frequently appealed to their strike audiences to "kick this damnable government out of power,"[4] and spoke from the Labour Party platforms in a municipal by-election at Von Brandis, Johannesburg, early in the strike.[5] Some strikers - the Germiston district strike committee executive - angled for S.A.P. support, and were accused by other strikers of having made a political move in appealing to the Prime Minister.

The politicians may not have tricked the trade unionists into politics, but they certainly coaxed them on. It seemed

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1. Even Col. Creswell said things that could be construed as encouragements to violence. (town hall meeting. R.D.Mail 30.1.22
2. S.A. Trades and Labour Council files. Statement by Thompson
4. Town Hall mass meeting. Rand Daily Mail 30.1.1922.
5. Thompson e.g. said the voters should vote Labour because "the issue, even in this context, is whether South Africa is to be white or black" (The Star 12.1.1922)

that the National Party would never allow the Status Quo Agreement to lapse one iota. "The National Party, above any other, is the guarantor of a White South Africa," wrote the prominent Nationalist, Dr.A.M.Moll. "Any person or system that attempts to undermine this palladium must be reckoned as an enemy to nationalism in this country ... there is no doubt that the (National) Party's sympathy is on the side of the strikers ... because the principles as issue concern the destiny of South Africa."[1*]

The Nationalist politicians denied that their part in the strike had anything to do with political opportunism. It was claimed by a deep conviction that the strikers were fighting for a White South Africa, they said.[2*] But Roos, at any rate, could not be vindicated entirely from "trying to drag some miserable party advantage out of the catastrophe."[3*] He took the opportunity, when addressing 2,000 people in the Germiston Market Square on 21.1.22, to extract "just one pledge and that is not to vote S.A.P. when the next election comes around."[4*] Roos committed a grave indiscretion. In a letter published in De Volkstem on 6.1.1922 he advised a section of the South African people to refrain, under certain circumstances, from supporting the efforts of the responsible government of the country in upholding law and order.[5*] These and other sayings caused J.X. Merriman to accuse Roos of being "at the bottom of the Revolution"[6*] when all the shooting was over.

Other political support given to the strikers came from the Executive Committee of the National Party in the Transvaal, which expressed itself "in full sympathy with the workers" on the question of the alleged removal of the Colour Bar by the nullification of the Status Quo Agreement. The Executive "feels

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1* Rand Daily Mail 24.1.'922.
2* Roos (R.D.Mail 23.1.22) Hattingh (De Volksblad 14.1.22) To Gen. Hertzog, the retaining of the Colour Bar was important above all else. (Interview with De Volksblad 9.2.22)
3* The Star 23.1.22.
4* ibid
5* Roos was careful afterwards to discourage violence (R.D.Mail 1.2.22) Though his accusations of the government being in league with the Chamber of Mines hardly had that effect. (R.D.Mail 1.2.1922)
6* House of Assembly 29.3.1922 HANSARD

itself at liberty to give its full support in so far as it affects the supply of provisions from the countryside to the workers ... and recommends that such assistance be given." A committee consisting of Dr. Moll, a Mr. Visser and a Mr. Pretorius was formed to whom supplies would be sent in Johannesburg and they would distribute these to the various strike committees.[1*] The executive, however, stressed that the question was not political but "the cause of the European workers."[2*]

In the Transvaal Provincial Council the Nationalist and Labour members got a motion accepted whereby £20,000 of provincial funds was allocated to strike relief. Most amazing, after considerable heated debate, the motion was passed including the words "industrial crisis, caused by the arbitrary methods employed by the Chamber of Mines against the workers."[3*]

The trade unionists who realised the danger to the trade union movement of the introduction of politics into an economic struggle, and who opposed it, had fought for some years with diminishing success.[4*] Trade unionism's connection with the Labour Party was so intimate that the political aspect could not be shaken off, and the Labourites naturally fought that trade unionism should not be divorced from Labour politics. "I have often deplored the principle of keeping politics out of trade unionism as to my mind it is absolutely senseless" said Col. Creswell. He argued that the question of which principles were to be adhered to in the governance of a country were too vital to be neglected by a wage earner.[5*] The mass of strikers were in favour of getting any support available; especially did they want support in Parliament from sympathetic political parties.[6*]

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2 * Rand Daily Mail 2.2.22. The Nationalist Party in the Transvaal had numerous branch committees collecting food. (R.D.Mail 3.2.1928)
3 * Rand Daily Mail 23.2.1922
4 * Trade unionists O'Sullivan (Tramwaymen's Union) The Star 31.1.22), Augmented Executive members Vosloo and Goulder at Coronation Park meeting (Rand Daily Mail 31.1.22) etc.etc.
5 * This was a pet theme of Creswell's. eg. to Johannesburg town hall meeting (The Star 26.2.1922) etc.
6 * e.g. Germiston meeting resolution (Rand Daily Mail 23.1.22)

1 * THIS PAGE OUGHT TO BE '54' BUT AS THE ERROR WAS DISCOVERED WHEN THE THESIS WAS COMPLETED, NO CHANGE IS MADE IN THE NUMBERING

The trade union leadership, however, only became officially politically conscious when the government was "backing the present attack by the employers on the White workers."[1] Then the Augmented Executive asked the workers "to defeat the present government ... That with this end in view a conference be arranged at once with representatives of the opposition parties in Parliament to investigate what immediate steps can be taken to remedy the present situation."[2] From that time the Augmented Executive was committed to accept the help of the politicians. It was a desperate turning to politics by an organisation made weary by the despair of two weeks of useless industrial negotiation at the Curlewis Conference. The Star warned: "There is certainly nothing in (the utterances of the Nationalists) which suggests that (they) can do, or will do, anything to prevent the strike being the failure which it is bound to be ... the miners would be well advised not to build up high hopes of any miracle working on the part of the Nationalists,"[3] while De Burger deplored the shift of the centre of gravity of the struggle from the economic to the political side.[4] The Friend commented that the strikers had rejected the Mr Prime Minister's opening for a settlement in favour of coquetting with the Nationalists.[5] Sir Abe Bailey said that the strike had been changed from an industrial strike into a political revolutionary strike.[6]

It was ironical that when the strikers turned their attention to the political rather than the industrial aspect of the strike, they fell completely out of step with the Nationalists. The difference was a difference in pace. The Nationalists wanted the strikers to vote for them in the next election, then a

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1. The Star 30.1.1922
2. ibid
3. The Star 31.1.1922
4. De Burger 1.2.1922
5. The Friend 3.2.1922
6. ibid

then Nationalist government would in turn help them. But the strikers could not wait for the general election - trade union-ism would be dead and buried long before then, and constitution-al politics were therefore of little use to them. Madeley explained this: "Roos says that we shall have a republic in four years. In four years we shall not have a White man on the Reef."[1*] The only type of politics which could help them were revolutionary politics, and the result of this reasoning was the resolution asking a group of Nationalist and Labour members of Parliament assembled in Pretoria[2*] to declare a republic and a provisional government. The resolution read: "That this mass meeting of citizens is of the opinion that the time has arrived when the domination of the Chamber of Mines and other financiers in South Africa should cease, and to that end we ask the members of Parliament assembled in Pretoria tomorrow to proclaim a South African Republic, and immediately to form a Provisional Government for this country."[3*] A wildly excited and cheering crowd of 2,000 in the Johannesburg Town Hall unanimously accept-ed this motion.[4*]

Mr. Tielman Roos and his "Parliament" of ten Nationalists and five Labour M.L.A.s were flabergasted. Roos stated emphat-ically that he would support constitutional methods only, and that neither he nor his party would have anything to do with revolution.[5*] This attitude in turn struck with amazement the deputation sent by the Town Hall meeting to present the petition. The deputation's leader, Mr. M. Kentridge, explained that 95 per cent. of the population of South Africa were theoretically republican.[6*] Roos interrupted that if they, the Nationalists, did anything unconstitutional today they would be placing their people, largely unarmed, at the mercy of the other side to be shot down like dogs. "We will not do it".[7*] Waterson, a Labour

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1* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
2* They had been invited there by Roos, acting on directions of the National Party in the Transvaal, to discuss a solution to the industrial crisis (Sunday Times 1.2.1922)
3* The Star 6.2.1922 4* ibid
5* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922 6* ibid
7* In any case, said Roos, the backveld would not support revolution (Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922)

M.L.A., pleaded for the deputation. Blood would flow for sure, but if the Members of Parliament present joined up with the men on the Rand, it would not flow in vain. But the Nationalist member for Middelburg replied that for the Labour leaders to come and say they wanted a republic made his hair stand on end. Then parliamentarian Madeley showed a gap between workers and Nationalists. He saw no virtue in a republic if it did not carry with it an entire change of system, he said.[1] The Nationalists were capitalistic, the Labourites socialistic, and once this difference came out, it was greater than the common wish to defeat the government. From then on the Nationalists could support the strikers with words only,[3] and this conference in Pretoria was the end of strikers' hopes of Opposition and workers combining to defeat the government by any means.

After this debacle at Pretoria there was nothing for the Labour leaders to do but play down the unfortunate revolution resolution. As most of the strikers were Afrikaners, it was best to hide the split which had occurred between the strike's labour leaders and the Nationalists, so that the dual loyalties of the strikers need not be strained. Waterson said that it had not been a Nationalist move, or a move by "Dutch" workers. Only two Afrikaners had been present at the meeting of East Rand strikers on 5.2.1922 when it had first been moved. It was merely the concoction of a small group of unknown East Rand strikers. He himself had played no part in moving it. He claimed, as far as was possible considering that he had presented the resolution to the Johannesburg meeting after personally carrying it from the East Rand, that he had had no part in a plan which Labourites would have been falling over each other to claim as their brain child, had it succeeded.[4] The

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1* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
3* They dared not fraternise any further with the Labourites without taking the risk of offending the conservative Cape Nationalists, who were already restive (Cape Times 8.2.1922)
4* All in Rand Daily Mail 8.2.1922

whole affair was hushed up. No more was heard of it from the Opposition side.[1] Hertzog, asked to comment on the republican resolution, said that it was "too great a folly seriously to engage our attention."[2]

Having failed to persuade politicians to declare a republic, the strikers returned to constitutional methods, and prepared to carry the fight on through Parliament. A huge meeting of 5,000 strikers in the Boksburg Market Square on 10.2.1922 composed "of citizens of Boksburg, Springs, Brakpan, Benoni and Germiston" demanded "that the M.L.A.s representing these constituencies appear immediately before their constituents to declare the attitude they are prepared to take in this grave crisis on the resumption of Parliament ... on February 17."[3] These friends in the Assembly could do little for the strikers. Boydell warned the strikers not to expect too much from Parliament. The workers had "to depend ten thousand times more upon their own efforts than upon the Parliament of this country."[4]

The strikers were not discouraged. "The opinion appears to be freely held amongst Rand miners ... 'If we hold out long enough Parliament is sure to pass legislation'", and "call the strike off ... on terms favourable to themselves."[4a] But it would take months for legislation to be passed, and Smuts' majority in Parliament would not back the workers in any case."[5] Col. Creswell laughed at the cry of "Leave the matter to Parliament." What the workers needed was another parliament, he said.[6]

The Nationalists did comparatively little in support of the strike cause when Parliament opened on 17.2.1922. Roos faded, and spoke vigorously only when he was being personally

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1* The resolution had caused Nationalists in Craddock to pledge their support to Smuts' government (Cape Times 8.2.1922)
2* De Volksblad 9.2.1922
3* Rand Daily Mail 10.2.1922
4* Rand Daily Mail 13.2.1922
4a* The Star 17.2.1922
5* There were plenty of warning signals that Parliament would not budge. (Rand Daily Mail 24.2.1922)
6* The Star 17.2.1922

attacked for stirring up trouble on the Rand. For long periods he was absent from the House. The Nationalist leader, General Hertzog, put a motion that both parties in the strike should have their case heard before an impartial court or tribunal, and said that if this was accepted by Parliament, the strike would end in two days. He held that the Chamber of Mines would not dare reject such a court, because of fear that Parliament might alternatively take over the mines. But the motion was defeated.[1*]

The Labour Party members, on the other hand, fought valiantly in Parliament for the strikers. The liason between the Labour Party and the strikers was very close all during the strike. It was a natural alliance of the industrial and political wings of the same movement of the working classes. Boydell put forward a motion that Parliament should compel the Chamber of Mines to receive back all the strikers on the terms existing before they went out, and that an Arbitration Board should decide future differences.[2*] He said that South Africa as a whole would suffer if the men lost their cause.[3*] Madeley argued that the Chamber of Mines was out to break the trade unions "whose growing strength they regard as a stumbling block."[4*] Waterson refused to admit that the mining industry could not be carried on "without some adjustment"[5*] - not that this refusal to face economic facts did the strikers any good.

It was only when the extremists among the strikers were shooting down people on the Rand that the Labour parliamentarians had to wash their hands of the whole affair. On their behalf, Mr. Boydell declared that they had always deprecated violence, whether by the strikers or hooligans or by the police.[6*]

1* House of Assembly 21.2.1922 Hansard
2* People's Weekly 18.2.1922
3* House of Assembly 21.2.1922 Hansard
4* House of Assembly 22.2.1922 Hansard
5* House of Assembly 27.2.1922 Hansard
6* House of Assembly 9.3.1922 Hansard

SOCIALISM AND BOLSHEVISM

Chapter IV

Labour was a powerful force on the Rand in the early nineteen twenties. In 1922 the Rand was dotted with Labour Party constituencies. In the Transvaal Provincial Council and in the Johannesburg Town Council the Labourites were in a strong minority, represented by such doughty fighters as Jimmy Green, George Hay, J.Wilson and M. Jessop. Benoni had a Labourite town council, and Labour was represented prominently on most other Reef town councils.

Trade unionism, however, was not in quite so happy a position. The 1922 strike was in part an attempt of the S.A. I.F. to show its ability to combat big business at a time when organised trade unionism had received several reverses. The strike was an attempt to halt the steady deterioration in working conditions, and the increasingly off-handish way in which employers were treating trade unionism. The strike was also an attempt by trade unionism to win back control of the workers, to stop internal bickerings. This solidarity was achieved at once.[1*] The S.A.I.F. was able to go to the Curlewis Conference with the free hand to speak for all the workers, untrammeled by conditions from Unions.[2*] But the Conference's failure meant the end of total worker support for the Augmented Executive, which, when it decided to delegate much of its power to the district strike committees in each town, had to submit this decision in the form of a resolution to a Johannesburg Town Hall meeting of strikers. But it was nevertheless not until much later that the over-all leadership of the S.A. I.F. was questioned. This generally moderate S.A.I.F. leadership meant amicable relations between strikers and public, police, politicians, newspapers and with, if not the magnates, at least the managements of the mines, the workshops and the

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1* This was believed by members of the Augmented Executive. (R.D.Mail 18.1.1922)
2* Madeley in The Star 6.2.1922.

power stations. This amicability depended too upon both sides being evenly balanced in fortune, and not being jaded, the strikers enjoying the leisure, and the magnates confident of early victory. No one had yet lost his temper. Once these conditions changed, relations deteriorated and settlement became more difficult to achieve, leading to a further deterioration in relations, ad infinitum to "revolt". Then the apathy and even hostility to the strike of about half of the strikers[1*] began to show. "There has never been any soul in the strike, and its bodily vigour flags perceptably," said the Cape Times in late January.[2*]

Although the Augmented Executive had managed to bring out on strike all the White mine workers, it was unable to ensure that condition for success in any strike - a closed shop. The White mine workers were only a minority of the whole body of employees on the mines. If the White officials and[3*] the Black labourers and semi-skilled workers combined their brains and brawn, they could replace the White mine workers to a large extent, and have the same success in undermining the strikers as large scale scabbing would do.

Even the solidarity of the White mine workers proved something of a handicap. Once the strike had begun, the S.A.I.F. could not make settlements piecemeal, no matter how advantageous such settlements might have been, because it had decided to hold out for a complete settlement at one time with all the bodies of employers concerned.[4*] This all-sink-or-swim-together policy might have worked if all the bodies of employees concerned had been as remote from a settlement with their employers as were the gold mine workers, or the coal miners, who could put little pressure on the employers by striking, since their labour was not essential to production.

1* 13,500 out of 22,000 workers had voted for the strike (above)
2* Cape Times 30.1.1922
3* The Underground Officials Association early decided on "strict neutrality." (R.D.Mail 16.1.22) But soon officials were encouraging scabbing. (The Star 18.1.22)
4* "Labour Organisation in South Africa" page 85

But the members of the Engineering and Founders Association on the Vereeniging Iron plants got more and more restive as favourable seperate terms were offered them, and eventually, in early March, they bolted back to work.[1] The employees of the Engineering Shops were offered private arbitration by their employers at the Curlewis Conference,[2] and cold have settled their part of the strike had they not been bound to Unions with hardly a dog's chance. The V.F.P. employees could have made an independent satisfactory peace, the V.F.P. chairman Bernard Price offering that points in dispute be settled between shop stewards and the Company.[3] But the employees could not agree.

The strikers were ill placed financially to fight the rich and influential Chamber of Mines. When the strike began, some of the Unions concerned had reserves of funds, but many were entirely destitute. The Union which included the bulk of the strikers, the Mine Workers Union, was in financial trouble, and the S.A.I.F. itself was pennyless.[4] Cases of strikers requiring food soon occurred. Various plans were made to feed those who could not be aided by strike funds.[5] Some plans collapsed, but others did valiant service. There were meal kitchens for single men.[6] The Rand Aid Association and other bodies assisted.[7] A central fund for the alleviation of distress among strikers was formed, and the trustees included business men and prominent civil servants.[8] Street collections were held, and plays, dances and horse races were put on to collect funds for strike relief. Farmers from surrounding districts were most generous, and a steady stream of vegetable laden carts came daily to the Rand towns.

1* The Star 4.3.1922
2* Rand Daily Mail 24.1.1922
3* ibid
4* The Star 17.1.22. The Boilermakers, Reduction workers, Woodworkers and engine drivers were well placed financially (R.D. Mail 18.1.22).
5* e.g. plan to have government food supplied to indignent by magistrates (The Star 2.2.22) 6* The Star 13.2.1922
7* e.g. Springs Municipal employees gave two days salary a month (The Report of the Mining Industry Board page 43)
8* Rand Daily Mail 18.1.1922

Heidenberg and Rustenburg districts sent in foodstuffs to be paid for when the strikers resumed work, or as gifts.[1*] So did the farmers in the Muldersdrift and Alberton districts.[2*] From as far afield as Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein,[3*] Pretoria and Heilbron,[4*] vegetables and meat came. In addition, there were many private gifts from Rand citizens.[5*]

Although there appears to have been enough food to go round,[6*] the problem of distress was not solved completely because of uneven distribution. Humiliating methods of collecting free food caused many to prefer to go hungry.[7*] Supplies were flinched in some cases.[8*] Men on theft charges pleaded that their families were starving because of the strike.[9*] There was distress and it steadily undermined the position of the S.A.I.F.

Weak in funds, the strength of trade unionism did not lie in efficient organisation either. The S.A.I.F. had been weakened by recent disaffiliations,[10*] and many of the unions yet affiliated were lukewarm. Even at its strongest, the S.A.I.F. was not a body suitable to control a to-the-death strike because it had no coercive powers over affiliated unions. The augmentation of the S.A.I.F. into the S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive was not a success.[11*] This body proved to be unwieldy because it was too large, and it could not be reduced without offending one or other union. Lack of time prevented the evolution of a working arrangement, like an inner working and an outer ornamental executive. Its movements tended to be sluggish, and its inability to take rapid decisions and show a masterful leadership played no small part in its overthrow in the final stages of the strike by the more militant and energetic of the strikers.

1* Rand Daily Mail 19.1.22
2* The Star 1.2.1922
3* The Star 3.2.1922
4* The Star 10.2.1922
5* The Friend 31.1.1922
6* Especially were the outlying areas such as Witbank and Krugersdorp well supplies (Rand Daily Mail 1?2.1922)
7* The Star 31.1.1922
8* ibid
9* Hertzog in interview with De Volksblad 9.2.1922 after he had visited the Rand.
10* e.g. Transvaal Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks Union. The staff (clerical) of the Johannesburg Power Station were not sure whether they were disaffiliated or not (R.D.Mail 1.3.1922)
11* [illegible] (THE STAR) 2.3.1922

The S.A.I.F. was too small a federation of trade unions to successfully put pressure on South Africa's greatest industry. After the strike had begun the trade union leaders started to wish regretfully for one big industrial union embracing all South Africa's White workers, instead of being stuck with a small federation of sectional and squabbling unions.[1] They resolved to organise labour in South Africa on new lines after the strike, but that did not solve the problem of winning the strike first.

The S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive included moderate extremists and extreme moderates,[2] the differences of opinion soon throwing the executive into confusion and inability to act strongly over one of the most important issues which the Augmented Executive had to face - the advisability of declaring a general strike of all unions affiliated to the S.A.I.F.

The position was that only a group of the unions affiliated to the S.A.I.F. went on strike on January 10. The other affiliated unions, uninvolved in the demands made in the "ultimatum", continued work, but the S.A.I.F. could only bring to bear its full strength, such as it was, on behalf of the unions whose grievances it was representing, if it got the whole body of over 40 unions affiliated to it to go on a general strike. This would mean strikes in areas as far afield as Durban and Pretoria, but it was a long way from paralysing the industrial life of the nation - which was the implicit intention of a general strike. If all the bodies affiliated to the S.A.I.F. went out on strike, South African industry would be dealt a heavy blow, but only if other non-affiliated trade unions and bodies of workers, like the all-powerful National Union of Railway and Harbours Servants (Nurahs), came out in sympathy, would the country be paralysed commercially and industrially. Many governmental and business pressures might then

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1. Sunday Times 18.1.1922
2. "There appear to be many persons connected with the trade union movement on the Rand ... who held the strongest views in favour of direction action" (Martial Law Report 1922 para 131)

force the gold mine magnates to give in to the gold mine workers. Thus for the general strike to have any chances of success, the S.A.I.F. affiliated unions had to strike together, and the movement had to snowball to other workers - two very unlikely premises. If the general strike should fail, it would mean the collapse of the strike and of the S A.I.F., for such a failure would expose the stark isolation of the mine workers, and the powerlessness of the S.A.I.F.

That was the choice which lay before the members of the S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive. If the trade union leaders who composed it had thought that a general strike would have succeeded, they would have voted for it.[1] But first they decided to put out feelers to see if the affiliated unions, and, more important, the mass of White workers in South Africa, would respond to a call for a general strike from the S.A.I.F. A resolution was passed that "this Executive of the S.A.I.F. requests all organisations of labour throughout South Africa to take the necessary constitutional steps to enable them to strike if called upon on January 16 at 7 a.m."[2]

The response was not encouraging. Generally, the railwaymen, who could have made all the difference because of their monopoly of communications, refused to come out.[3] Although they were sympathetic towards the mine workers, and disgruntled with their pay, working hours and treatment from higher-ups,[4] they dared not strike. The law forbade them to down tools on pain of forfeiting all their rights and privileges as civil servants.[5] Their leaders could by no means be sure of the allegiance of the mass of railwaymen, and even the leaders were split into warring factions.[6] They had a grievance that the gold mine workers had not helped them in their hour of need some years before.[7]

1* Thompson to Witbank meeting (R.D.Mail 13.2.1922)
2* The Star 12.1.1922.
3* The strike leaders gathered this (R.D.Mail 18.1.1922)
4* For a while some of them toyed with the idea of using the strike to put pressure on the government for higher pay, but found it too risky (The Star 15.1.1922)
5* B.D. Lombard to NURAH meeting in Germiston (The Star 21.1.22)
6* Germiston Railway Institute meeting (R.D.Mail 21.1.1922)
7* ibid.

The organising secretary of the Nurahs advised against the railwaymen being involved in a general strike.[1] They were working for their betterment along lines which did not involve a strike, he said.

Some isolated groups of railwaymen wanted to join in the projected general strike. The Bloemfontein railwaymen thought that "any further wage reduction would be better staved off in this way".[2] Kimberley Nurahs pledged themselves to support their comrades on the Rand "in as far as the constitution allows."[3] Germiston railwaymen expressed their sympathy with the strike.[4] But overall the railwaymen's support watered down to deploring the "existance of the present industrial crisis" and a promise "that if the railwaymen could assist in any way when they would willingly do so."[5]

The industrial workers of South Africa could not respond to the S.A.I.F.'s suggestion of a general strike because they had been badly hit by the general depression. From Kimberley the Trades and Labour Council wired the S.A.I.F. "As Kimberley at present is practically closed down, a strike here is impossible."[6] This state of industrial stagnation was true in varying degrees of the rest of the country. The position was so hopeless in Pietermaritzburg that the industrial workers there did not even bother to take a ballot on whether to strike or not.[7] The unions in a prosperous way, on the other hand, had no wish to be involved in the mine workers' troubles. The powerful Typographical Union was doing very well, thank you, its president told the strikers. They had no labour bosses at their hand, they had no dictators to tell them what to do. While the strikers were putting that in their pipes and smoking it, Mr. Sampson added that he did not mean that the Typos were not in

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1* W. Moore to Germiston Railway Institute meeting (Star 21.1.22)
2* Rand Daily Mail 14.1.1922
3* ibid
4* The Star 21.1.1922
5* Witbank & NUR&H meeting Rand Daily Mail 13.1.1922
6* The Star 14.1.1922
7* ibid

sympathy with the strikers. The Typos shed tears at the lies which they had to print against the strikers. In future the Typos would demand of the newspapers that they gave the strike case a fair deal.[1*] But that was almost all the Typos had to give them.[2*]

Only a small number of unions voted in favour of sympathetic action if called upon - the S.A. Operative Masons, the Meat Trade employees,[2*] seven sections of the Industrial Union, the Durban branch of the S.A. Boilermakers, Ironworkers and Shipbuilders Society,[3*] being among them.

Talk of a general strike was therefore dropped until the failure of methods of negotiation at the Curlewis conference forced the Augmented Executive to again consider the only constitutional alternative to negotiation - a general strike. As the success of a general strike depended on the willing co-operation of all affiliated S.A.I.F. unions in the first place, a meeting was called of the Joint Executives, consisting of all the executive members of all the unions affiliated to the S.A.I.F.[4*] This meeting of the Joint Executives reported back to the Augmented Executive, which accepted its recommendation that unrestricted powers should be given to the district strike committees, but which refused to accept the recommendation that a general strike should be called. Tentative feelers put out to the Augmented Engineers Union had shown that the attitude of workers had not changed.[5*]

For some weeks the Augmented Executive put aside the idea of a general strike,[6*] and its chief Joe Thompson made appeals to sympathetic unions for financial aid instead. But pressures on it from mass meetings, from strike committees and from commandos to declare such a strike caused it to try once again, in middle February, to see if a substantial portion of South

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1* Rand Daily Mail 1.2.1922
2* Grade I Typo members had a weekly levy of 1s.6d. for strike relief imposed on them. ("Printers Saga" Downes,
2* The Star 16.1.1922
3* The Star 17.1.1922
4* Rand Daily Mail 30.1.1922
5* The Friend 12.2.1922
6* It stated: "no advantage would be gained by calling a general strike at the present juncture." (R.D.Mail @ 14.2.1922)

Africa's White workers would support it. Indications were clear that the feelings of the majority were still definately against joining in a general strike.[1]

As the unlikelihood of any solution to the strike coming from negotiation became more and more obvious, a growing minority in the Augmented Executive began to press for a general strike regardless of the chances of its success.[2] At the same time the Augmented Executive was assailed from all sides with demands that a general strike should be called. Strikers who would grasp at any straw, Bolsheviks who wanted the conflagration to spread, rough miners who wanted to have a crack at someone,[3] all urged and threatened the augmented Executive until, on March 5, that body was forced by a mob of strikers from Fordsburg to declare a general strike.[4]

As was only to be expected, the general strike was a failure. A number of unions affiliated to the S.A.I.F. instructed their members to stop work.[5] Many other such unions did not.[6] Although unions affiliated to the S.A.I.F. existed in many parts of South Africa, nowhere outside of the Rand did workmen go on strike. A quiet working day was reported at Pretoria, the nearest large industrial centre, on March 7 when the general strike was supposed to have paralysed the country.[7] An aggregate meeting in Pretoria of engineers, railwaymen and town mechanics refused to strike. Municipal power house employees and tramwaymen, after some hesitation waiting to see what other workers were doing, were happy to continue work.[8] Only the Pretoria building workers eventually came out. On the Rand a number of affiliated unions came out or were intimidated to stop work. The Rand railwaymen had to be forced out of their workshops by threats of what would happen to their families and their homes in their absence at work.[9]

1• Sunday Times 19.2.1922
2• ibid.
3• Motions were handed to platforms from meetings (Rand Daily Mail 20.2.1922). Strikers' committees passed motions (The Star 22.2.22) Executive members were bullied (The Star 25.2.1922)
4• For description see R.D.Mail 6.3.1922
5• i.e. Woodworkers, Building workers (The Star 6.3.1922)
6• These were the majority (The Star 6.3.1922)
7• R.D.Mail 8.3.22
8• R.D.Mail 9.3.1922
9• Rand Daily Mail 10.3.1922

Thus the general strike completely failed in its object of bringing pressure to bear on the government and the public so that they would force the Chamber of Mines to come to a settlement with the mine workers.

The trade unionists, in calling the strike, had hoped that the South African public would actively support the workers' cause.[1] This was a misplaced hope. If the workers remained law-abiding, South African public opinion was useful in restraining the Chamber of Mines from imposing impossible conditions of re-employment, in influencing Parliament to treat the strikers' cause with sympathy. Private citizens would help the strikers with food, clothing and money. But that was all. The White population of the Union was generally bourgeois and apathetic to workers' complaints.

The strike leaders, nevertheless, made strenuous efforts to enlist pppular active support, and even tried preaching a Holy War against the Chamber of Mines. A week after the strike began, Joe Thompson said "This is not an ordinary strike; it is a strike for the future of South Africa, a strike in which all selfishness has been cast aside."[2] Some weeks later he said that the workers had been keeping the industries of the country going for the benefit of all, and they now expected support from all.[3] A Pretoria Town Hall meeting addressed by Col. Creswell held that as the strikers were fighting "that the industries of South Africa should be conducted on lines contributing to the welfare of the mass of the people,... they should from all classes receive the fullest support and financial help."[4] Strike leader George also pictured the Rand workers as the defenders of the nation. He called on them to refuse to return to work until Parliament stated that nothing would be done to the detriment

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1* T.A. Richard "Conditions on the Rand." article.
2* Thompson in Selborne Hall- Rand Daily Mail 17.1.1922
3* Labour rally in Johannesburg Town Hall. The Star 30.1.22
4* The Star 17.2.1922.

of the future welfare of South Africa.[1] Trade union leaders assured the workers of South Africa that other big industrialists would follow the example of the Chamber of Mines, and displace White workers by cheap indentured Native labour,[2] or demand sacrifices of the industrial workers equivilant to those made[3] by the mine workers for the low grade mines.

The South African public was unimpressed. When the district strike committees sent out representatives on mission, the crowds which turned out to hear the strikers' case were disappointingly small.[4] White South Africa was not convinced that its safety was endangered. Industrial workers had no wish to share the strikers' troubles. Business ticked over much the same as usual on the Rand dispite the strike. Big business said that it was not worried about the drop in customers,[5] small businesses refused to do anything about the warnings that their shops would suffer by a shrinkage of the White working population.[6] The business world generally was confident that the strike would soon be over with a victory for the Chamber of Mines, an attitude which lasted as long as the strike, both in England and in South Africa. It was only at the end of the strike that commerce slowed down seriously and trade was hit badly.[7]

The general public were wary of supporting the strikers for many reasons. Leading strikers broadly hinted to the rank and file of the South African police that their place as workers lay with the strikers, and that they should be insubordinate, mutiny and support rebellion.[8] Just as menacing were the appeals from the trade union leaders to the workers to "stop every wheel" in the country, including the railways, in order to paralyse the enemy of this country."[9] The public did not know who that national enemy might be, but they did not want to share in the general paralysis. The public was uneasy because of the

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1* Coronation Park, Krugersdorp (The Star 18.2.22)
2* The Star 23.1.22
3* Rand Daily Mail 30.1.1922
4* e.g. Pietersburg (De Volksblad 31.1.22), Vredeford (Rex vs. R.D. Erasmus.)
5* The Star 18.2.1922
6* Kentridge (R.D.Mail 24.1.22), Hendrikz (The Star 17.2.1922)
7* See R.D.Mail 15.2.22
8* Waterson at Boksburg meeting (R.D.Mail 10.2.22) for instance.
9* Waterston (R.D.Mail 14.1.22)

speeches of sedition which were being delivered on the Rand. The Cape Times complained: "What is to happen to this country if ... an industrial dispute is to be exploited by men whose aim is to overset the whole order of society for their own ends ?"[1] Then the continual finding of dynamite on tramlines[2] and railway lines during the strike was unsettling. The strike leaders pointed out how curious it was that the dynamite was always found by the police or other persons before it exploded. Yet these narrow escapes of life created a bad odour round the strike movement inevitably. The withdrawal of essential services bee on the mines on 14.1.1922 antagonised South African opinion which did not want the main national industry to be crippled by flooding. It was so obviously an unpopular move that the trade unionists had to explain by saying that they had been forced to withdraw workers engaged on essential services because the mine managements were using scabs to work the mines.[3] The Chamber of Mines said this was a falsehood.[4] It was widely felt that the withdrawal had been ordered to force the Chamber to give way, without any thought of the mines as a national asset.[5] Thompson may have been sincere when he said that, in withdrawing the essential services, the strikers were performing a duty "to the White population of South Africa, and the workers are prepared to pay the price for the future of the country."[6] The strikers may have been prepared to sacrifice the gold mining industry for the sake of the principle of the defence of the Colour Bar on the Rand, but there were not many others who would travel that road with them.[7]

In the more limited area of Johannesburg the population was

1* Cape Times 7.3.1922
2* e.g. Jeppe (The Star 17.2.22), Main Street (Sunday Times 19.2.22)
3* i.e. the engine drivers did not mind lowering pumpmen to stop flooding, but they refused to lower scabs into the mines who would get the industry starting again without the strikers.
4* Rand Daily Mail 14.1.1922
5* This suspicion was strengthened by the S.A.I.F.'s refusal to discuss with the Underground Officials Association what were essential services (The Star 16.1.1922)
6* Thompson in Selborne Hall, Johannesburg. The Star 17.1.1922
7* A strike audience in the Johannesburg town hall cheered the thought of mines being flooded.(R.D.Mail 1.2.22)

offended by the turning off, on two occasions during the strike, of the power for street lighting, trams, lifts, and in certain areas, the water supply.[1] This meant interference with the running of hospitals, of nursing homes, the bringing of most industries to a standstill, the shutting down of the abattoirs and other cold storage facilities, and losses in municipal revenue of about £4,000 daily.[2] It meant the public having to walk to their offices, or paye exorbitant taxi fares each morning, and trudging miles home each evening to homes cheerless without electric light.

The first occasion when this power failure occurred was from January 21 to February 3. There was a good deal of bicker-ing between the S.A.I.F. and the Johannesburg Town Council's Tramways and Lighting Committee, each blaming the other for the stoppage of power. Each hoped that the infuriated public would blame the other for the stoppage of municipal services.

The power was stopped because the coal reserves mined before January 1 (the start of the strike on the coal mines) had been used up. The Essential Services Committee of the S.A.I.F. would not allow the municipality to use coal mined after January 1 at the Chamber of Mines' coal mines in the Witbank district, because such coal was "scab", having been mined contrary to the Mining Regulations and while the coal miners were on strike. The S.A.I.F. was able to put pressure on the Johannesburg Municipality by threatening that the Power Station employees, who were members of the S.A.I.F., would strike if "scab" coal was ~~used~~.used.

The S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive argued that the Tramways and Lighting Committee was responsible for the stopping of services because the committee had refused to ask out existing

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1* (R.D.Mail 25.1.22, 24.1.22, 21.1.22, 23.1.22 etc.)
2* Rand Daily Mail 24.1.22

supplies of coal, but had gone full steam ahead and rapidly exhausted its reserves.[1*] The S.A.I.F. held that the Tramways and Lighting Committee had done this deliberately to put the S.A.I.F."on the spot" by making it have to refuse the use of scab coal and thereby incur the displeasure of the inconvenienced public.

Trade union principles were the cause of the S.A.I.F. opposing the use of scab coal, according to the S.A.I.F. The trade unionists said that they were willing to help get municipal services going again if the municipality would buy its coal only from collieries where coal miners enjoyed satisfactory conditions of employment. It approved of Grenfell Colliery (between Breyton and Ermelo), O'Neil Colliery and Albion Colliery.[2*] On 25.1.22 the S.A.I.F. offered that "any coal mine running under the conditions laid down by the S.A.I.F. that is ready to supply coal to the municipality for essential services will have its coal faciliated as far as the ... Federation is able to do so."[3*]

The public of Johannesburg did not care about trade union principles, but a lot about its conveniences, and the ordinary citizen did not see how his being inconvenienced could help the strikers.[4*] Besides, the Tramways and Lighting Committee had practical reasons for refusing to buy coal from collieries approved by the S.A.I.F. It was a waste of the ratepayers' money to buy new coal while the so-called scab coal, already delivered and paid for, lay in huge mounds in the sheds of the Power Station. The non-scab coal, as enquiries showed, was dearer and inferior in quality. If the town council agreed to buy such non-scab coal, such action would be an admission of the right of the S.A.I.F. to dictate how the municipality should be run,[5*]

1* Augmented Executive Statement(15.1.1922 Sunday Times)
2* (Rand Daily Mail 17.1.22, 21,1,22, 24, 1.22)
3* The Star 21.1.1922
4* Chamber of Commerce meeting resolution (R.D.Mail 21.1.22)
5* 844y Town councillors at council meeting (R.D.Mail 23.1.22)

and any agreement with new coal producers would have meant a breach of faith towards the Coal Owners' Association who had supplied the "scab" coal.[1*]

In opposition to these solid arguments, all the S.A.I.F. could bring forward were its principles. Bodies of Johannesburg citizens did not hesitate. The Chamber of Commerce,[2*] the Witwatersrand Commercial Exchange,[3*] the Citizens Protection League,[4*] the Witwatersrand Council of the Women's S.A.Party, and other groups urged upon the Town Council the necessity of maintaining essential services by any means "without yielding to the dictations of any outside body."[5*] The controlling executive of the Associated Scientific and Technical Societies in South Africa called on the government to stop interference with essential services.[6*] The Federation of Ratepayers of Johannesburg demanded that the Town Council use any coal available, and called on the "government, if necessary, to exercise its function in the protection of the life and safety of the people."[7*]

The Labour members of the Town Council, together with four other members who supported them, managed to prevent the "scab" coal being used from late January to the end of February, but only at the cost of piecemeal concessions by the S.A.I.F. essential services committee which managed to find various pockets of coal on the Rand which, with a good deal of broadmindedness, need not be labelled as absolutely scab.[8*]

In this way the supply of power for municipal services was resumed on January 3, and the crisis was staved off somehow and by various expedients until, in late February, the Tramways and Lighting Committee managed to rush - in the absence of some Labour councillors[9*] - a resolution through the Town Council

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1* ~~Gaay~~ Council meeting. Reported in R.D.Mail 24.1.1922.
2* R. Blane, president. R.D.Mail 28.1.1922
3* The Star 27.1.1922
4* League's general meeting decision. Rand Daily Mail 24.1.1922
5* Chamber of Commerce resolution. The Star 21.1.1922
6* special meeting of controlling executive. The Star 21.1.1922
7* Ratepayers' Association resolution. Rand Daily Mail 24.1.1922
8* The Star 14.2.1922
9* Rex vs P.S. Viljoen.

allowing it to order the Power Station manager to immediately start using the scab coal in the sheds.

The S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive was caught completely unawares. It was forced to order the workers of the Power Station to stop work immediately.[1*] This order applied also to the tramways employees, since that would stop transport even if the municipality managed to get the Power Station working without the S.A.I.F. artisans.

Whatever sympathy the public might have had for the strikers found difficulty surviving a few days without street lights[2*] without municipal transport. The lack of these amenities were much more resented in late February than they had been in late January, for lawlessness was rife and even greater and more widespread violence was threatening. The public did not relish having to live in unlit suburbs while gangs of hooligans were roaming about unchallenged, and volunteers of a scientific or technical bent rushed to offer their services to help get the Power Station running again. Members of the Scientific and Technical Society offered their services en bloc.[3*] The government, as explained above, had stepped in to prevent a complete cessation of power supply to the town, but within 48 hours the Town Council was able to assure two cabinet ministers that volunteers would run the Power Station. But some suburbs were without lights for up to a week.[4*]

Thoroughly alarmed now, the public began in some places to organise itself to resist violence.[5*] Some thousands of citizens, mainly from the middle class, joined the Special Constables to protect persons and property.[6*] Intimidation and lawlessness in late February had made the enemies of the strikers vorocious,

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1* Rand Daily Mail 28.2.1922
2* The Star 1.3.1922. There were complaints that the S.A.I.F. did not give concessions to hospitals etc. in spite of promises. Letters to editor The Star 1.3.1922 and 2.3.1922
3* The Star 1.3.1922
4* Rand Daily Mail 4.2.1922
5* For details read Rand Daily Mail 10.3.1922 report.
6* The Star 1.3.22.

and had silenced their friends.

The strikers had been warned repeatedly by the Afrikaans farmers that if disorder broke out, not only would the supply of meat, fruit and vegetables dry up, but the farmers would come in from the veld and assist the government in maintaining order.[1*] As violence increased in later February, the farmers sent less and less of the supplies which had been keeping the strike alive. Perhaps there was a reason apart from dislike of violence. The farmers had given of their surplus, but they had to sell also to the Rand in order to live. Because of the long duration of the strike, they found that tney could get no price for their produce on the Rand. Money was not circulating. Merino ewes were selling at 2s.6d. each, tollies at £1 and the rest of slaughter stock in the same ratio. Butter was selling at 6d. a lb.[2*] This was at the end of summer, when livestock was ready for the market and farmers expected to make most of the year's profit. The farmers had good reason to want the mines to start again, and it is not surprising that they swarmed into the Rand with their rifles at the call of Smuts on March 11

While neither the urban bourgeois or the farming community could subdue the Chamber of Mines for the strikers, the government could theoretically make any settlement it wished.

The Chamber of Mines would outlast the strikers in a lawabiding strike, it would win if the strikers resorted to violence Only government ~~arab~~ arbitration, forced on the parties if necessary, could save trade unionism from abject surrender, or a quick end caused by useless violence.

In the early days of the strike the S.A.I.F. generally acted as if the government was unfriendly and at best would give only malevolent neutrality. Many strike leaders assumed that the government wanted an opportunity to intervene against them on the excuse of disturbances of the peace. In this mood

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1* e.g. Col. Nicolaas, of Hekpoort, warns farmers will oppose violence (R.D.Mail 24.2.1922) Krugersdorp farmers meeting (Sunday Times 5.3.1922)

2* These figures in Rand Daily Mail 2.3.1922

the S.A.I.F. did no more than ask the Prime Minister to make a settlement on the workers' terms. But when the excitement and dreams of the early strike had dissolved, and the grim road to defeat stretched ahead, when the hopes of the Chamber of Mines capitulating had gone with the Curlewis Conference, then the Augmented Executive "having considered the letter of the Prime Minister, have now decided to accept his invitation to make use of the government for the purpose of investigating a basis of settlement of the present dispute."[1] Further, the executive arranged to send a deputation of five to meet Smuts in Pretoria on February 4.[2] These decisions came four days after the Augmented Executive sitting in committee had refused government interference.[3]

The deputation to Pretoria came home without a settlement. Smuts' terms were that the men should return to work on the best terms they could get. He promised that these terms would be "subject to readjustment and modification in the final settlement," that the government would appoint an impartial board to enquire and report on the strike, and that the government would implement the report "if the findings prove fair."[4] The Augmented Executive had refused a settlement without any guarantees before, and did so now again.

This attempt to come to terms with the Prime Minister was followed a few days later by a deputation of Nationalist parliamentarians seeing Smuts in Pretoria on the strikers' behalf. They were the same men who had just refused the request that they should form a republican government, and had squirmed out of an awkward situation by offering to interview Smuts on the workers' behalf. Two Labour members of Parliament, Waterston and Madeley, were included in this deputation which was headed

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1. Executive S.A.I.F. resolution. The Star 4.2.1922
2. The five were Thompson, George, W. Butler (Engine Drivers) W.S. Lewis (president S.A.Mine Workers Union) and J. Curran (coal miners' leader). Rand Daily Mail 4.2.1922
3. Rand Daily Mail 3.2.1922
4. Sunday Times 5.2.1922

by Tielman Roos and whose other members were the Rev. R.B. Hattingh, P. Grobler and B. Pienaar. But when the Labourites failed to arrive from Johannesburg on time, the Nationalists went right ahead with their interview, putting the strikers' case to Smuts in a moderate and conciliatory manner.[1] However, Smuts refused their request that he should "influence the Chamber of Mines to let the men return to work on pre-strike conditions," even by threatening the Chamber with adverse legislation. Smuts said this was impossible.[2]

The failure of this and the S.A.I.F. deputation signalled the end of approaches by the strike side to the Prime Minister for the time being.[3] It was Smuts attempt to end the strike by protecting scabs, having the mines re-opened, and telling the strikers to return "on the Chamber's terms. On any terms" pending a parliamentary settlement, which forced the now largely discredited S.A.I.F. to again consider how powerful a factor the government was in the strike, either for or against the workers.

The first reaction of the trade union leaders was to tell Smuts that they would fight him and his decision.[4] But when the mass of strikers refused to scab, their leaders cooled down, realising however, that the united front of strikers would crumble eventually unless they first won over the Prime Minister to support them through their moderation.

To this end the S.A.I.F. published new terms which no longer insisted that the gold mining industry should restart on a pre-strike basis, or that no change at all should be made in the Status Quo Agreement.[5] This watering down of the strikers' principles antagonised many, and Thompson found it expedient to explain that the modified proposals had been put forward because the workers had got to make real sacrifices for the benefit of

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1* Perhaps they did not regret the absence of the two Labour firebrands. After all, Madeley had considered that Smuts' consent to meet the S.A.I.F. deputation was a sign of weakness. (The Star 7.2.1922)
2* The Star 9.2.1922
3* Minister of Mines' suggestion turned down (R.D.Mail 17.2.22)
4* R.D.Mail 15.2.1922, 16.2.1922.
5* The Star 22.2.1922

all. Unless a settlement was reached violence would break out - and the strikers had to go some way to prevent this, as it would lead to the defeat of the White workers on the Rand.[1*] Unfortunately for the S.A.I.F., its moderate overtures were unconvincing in the general Rand atmosphere of increasing violence, street corner demagogy and the obviousness of the fact that the S.A.I.F. could no longer speak for all the strikers.[2*] De Burger warned that if violence came, law and order would have to be given precedence to the merits of the S.A.I.F.'s case.[3*] The strikers were strongly suspected all over South Africa of wanting to set up a socialist state, an ambition which all sections opposed.[4*]

So Smuts was by no means under public pressure to compromise his terms of 13.2.1922 and encourage the Chamber of Mines to accept the new S.A.I.F. moderation.

The S.A.I.F., however, was caught right in the middle, with the strikers deserting it on one side, and its policy of negotiation a complete failure, was forced to back down yet further. It set up a special sub committee to find terms to meet the ever more critical situation, and these terms, which gave away much for which the strikers had been fighting, were adopted and forwarded to the government and the Chamber of Mines.[5*] Again the Chamber sternly refused to consider any deviation from its conditions stated on January 28, and Smuts still refused to enforce a decision.

Thompson hoped for nothing from Smuts, but he believed that, if the strikers were sufficiently moderate and held together, opinion in the cabinet and in the S.A.Party would demand that "This thing in the interests of South Africa must cease."[6*]

1* Thompson at Germiston (R.D.Mail 22.2.1922)
2* Apart from insubordination, the Augmented Executive had in late January surrendered many powers to district strike committees. (The Star 31.1.1922)
3* De Burger 1.2.1922.
4* Craddock (Cape Times 8.2.22). Pietermaritzburg (Natal Daily News 9.2.1922)
5* Rand Daily Mail 25.2.1922
6* At Germiston demonstration 4.3.1922 The Star.

This was an unfruitful hope, because Smuts controlled his cabinet and Party.

As the whole strike organisation was visably crumbling in early March, the members of the Augmented Executive met in emergency session and decided to ask the Chamber of Mines to meet them on 4.3.1922 to try to arrive at a solution. This decision was reached after an all night sitting, and the S.A. I.F. delegates appointed for the proposed conference were Thompson, George, Bryce, Matthews, G. Brown, W. Butler and Gartrell.[1*]

There could be little doubt that the Augmented Executive at this stage was prepared to make considerable concessions. But the Chamber of Mines appears not ha to have been interested in negotiations at that stage. Its labour advisor Mr. Gemmill replied to the S.A.I.F. suggestions by sending back a very rude letter, telling the S.A.I.F. that the Chamber would not negotiate with it or even recognise its existance in the future.[2*]

An appeal from the S.A.I.F. to the government to arbitrate would have been very difficult to refuse at that stage,[3*] but those trade union leaders who still believed in such an approach were swept aside by the demand from their collegues and the extremist strikers[4*] that the answer to the Chamber of Mines and the government should be a general strike to paralyse the country.

The Central District Strike Committee, which had been usurping Augmented Executive powers for some weeks,[5*] called a conference of all strike committees and representatives of trade unions on the afternoon of 4.3.1922, a few hours after Gemmill's reply had been received. This was done over the head of the Augmented Executive. Fifty delegates, drawn from strike committees, and representatives of various trade union execut-

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1* Rand Daily Mail 3.3.1922
2* Sunday Times 5.3.1922
3* "The Chamber says that it will ignore the Federation. Let the Federation ignore the Chamber and appeal directly to Parliament (Rand Daily Mail leader 9.3.1922)
4* Especially the district strike committees from Randfontein to Springs had been agitating for a general strike.(Star 28.2.22
5* It had been sending commands even to Krugersdorp, although it was merely the Johannesburg strike committee (Star 2.2.22)

ives, attended. Resolutions were passed recommending the Augmented Executive to accept two executive members from each trade union concerned in the strike onto a new body called the Joint Executives, this body to have a meeting with the Chamber of Mines. Alternatively, a general strike should be called.[1*]

Here can be seen the struggle between the moderate and extremist trade unionists. The moderates were prepared to accept the Chamber of Mines' decision not to recognise the S.A.I.F. Instead, they asked the Chamber to negotiate with a new trade union body, the Joint Executives. The extremists wanted no such soft soap; they demanded a general strike.

And the extremists won, because they had the mobs and the militant commandos on their side. Percy Fisher, the Bolshevik extremist leader, told the cheering Johannesburg Town Hall meeting on 5.3.1922 "The Augmented Executive have been at the head of the strike. We will make them fight."[2*] And later in the day the Fordsburg Commando intimidated the Augmented Executive into accepting the general strike.

This acceptance of a general strike marked the abdication of the Augmented Executive from the leadership of the 22,000 strikers. But the executive had been losing its grip on the strike for a long time. The turning point of its fortunes had come when it failed to obtain a negotiated settlement at the Curlewis Conference. This failure left the Augmented Executive without a policy. "The Federation seems to have no particular policy at all. It tells the strike committees to do what they like and hope for the best. And all the time mines are flooding, ... Natives are leaving, and the muddle generally is becoming more and more dangerous."[3*] The Augmented Executive, failing in negotiation, could offer the strikers nothing but defeat by exhaustion. Acting on their own, the Johannesburg Town Hall crowd that met every lunch hour, 2,000 strong, passed the resolution

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1* The Star 6.3.1922
2* Martial Law Commission 1922 para 121.
3* The Cape Times 1.2.1922

demanding a republic. As the Mayor of Springs said, they knew what the resolution meant. But what were they to do - allow themselves to be starved like dogs into submission?[1] The impotence of the Augmented Executive caused a hum of discontent. Madeley had to warn a Krugersdorp meeting against swopping horses in while crossing the turged stream,[2] and a Chamber of Mines representative gloated: "The Federation's representatives ... are hopelessly discredited, and they know it."[3] The executive tried to have a ballot taken among the strikers to bolster up its authority - or- release it from further responsibility in a deteriorating situation. Unfortunately, at this time the Chamber of Mines started taunting the S.A.I.F. that it was afraid to hold a ballot.[4] The extremists thereupon said that the S.A.I.F. would be dancing to the Chamber's tune if it held a ballot, and that was how most of the strikers appear to have seen it.[5] Thompson had to agree that the ballot would be held only when the strikers had forced the issue,[6] and then only to decide the conditions on which the men would return to work.[7] The Augmented Executive could neither truely represent the strikers or get out of office.

At this stage in later February, under the strain of a drawn out strike and the various blows and disappointments it had sustained, the trade union movement started to burst at the seams. The less fervent trade unionists were falling away until the remaining die-hards were forced to combine woh with the socialist extremists, who included a group of Bolsheviks.

The difficulties of keeping 22,000 strikers faithful to the cause was realised by the trade union leaders right from the start, and to bolster up the weaker ones, resolutions to stand firm were passed at strike meetings.[8]

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1. Rand Daily Mail 6.2.1922
2. The Star 3.2.1922
3. Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
4. Chamber of Mines spokesman (Sunday Times 5.3.1922).
5. Town Hall meeting (R.D.Mail 6.3.1922), Krugersdorp meeting (R.D.Mail 7.3.1922)
6. The Star 6.3.1922
7. ibid
8. e.g. Witbank meeting (R.D.Mail 2.2.1922)

There was plenty to make the better class strikers uneasy. The withdrawal of essential services on the mines was unpopular among those strikers who thought it meant that their livelihoods were being destroyed. The more skilled and prosperous unions wanted to work the essential services, and police the reduction works on the mines to prevent crackpot strikers from destroying that portion of the industry.[1] But nevertheless cases of recantations among the strikers were negligible in January.

What tore the first hole in trade union solidarity was the Germiston strike committee's executive's independent action in early February, when it tried to negotiate a separate peace with the Prime Minister. The powerful S.A. Mine Workers' Union was against this conciliatory approach to the Chamber of Mines through Smuts,[2] and a group of miners literally barracaded the executive in its offices in Germiston until it agreed not to send a deputation to confer with Smuts.[3] The Germiston executive's action had already, however, considerably embarrassed the S.A.I.F. The Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (Germiston branch) supported the Germiston executive directly,[4] while a Witbank meeting called on the S.A.I.F. to request a conference with Smuts "in view of the fact that General Smuts has granted an interview with the Germiston Strike Committee."[5]

The Augmented Executive tried to close the dyke by issueing a statement that the Germiston body had intended no more than prepare proposals for submission to the Augmented Executive..."it was not their intention to act independently in any way."[6] This had not been the public's impression, and the S.A. I.F. stated that "local strike committees should not make comments to the Press or others before they have reached some sort of finality with us."[7]

1* Benoni meeting resolution (The Star 3.2.1922) (R.D.Mail 18.1.22)
2* R.D.Mail 3.2.1922
3* ibid
4* The Star 4.2.1922
5* Rand Daily Mail 3.2.1922
6* Sunday Times 5.2.1922
7* ibid

Trade union unity was disrupted also in Turffontein, where Major E.W. Hunt M.L.A., led his working class constituency towards a solution of the strike independent of the "executives of the trade unions or of the Augmented Executive," as he explicitly stated. He said that he did not want to go behind the backs of the trade union bodies, but he thought the time had arrived for Turffontein to give a lead.[1] The support he received helped split trade unionism, though his solution came to nothing.

Scabbing - that dread word for any strike organisation - began on the coal fields in early February. By 4.2.1922 there were reports of large scale scabbing to wide flung coal mines.[2] Two days later the Middelburg strikers were reported as being anxious to return to work.[3] A meeting at Witbank on 7.2.1922 showed "a real anxiety on the part of the workers to assist the other side in arriving at a fair and reasonable settlement."[4] Coal strikers leader J. Hobson said that the coal miners were "prepared to return to work provided that the points at issue be submitted to an impartial arbitration board."[5]

This movement spread to the Rand. From about the second week in February, rumours of large bodies of men wanting to return to work were going the rounds. On 8.2.1922 a group of strikers were said to have approached the management of one of the big mines with the request that they be allowed to return to work on the Chamber's terms.[6] On the same day a meeting was called by a City Deep shaft steward to discuss the possibility of returning to work. The meeting was packed - but mostly by strikers who had come to howl down the scheme.[7] On the Witwatersrand Deep certain surface employees proposed a ballot to test whether the strikers wanted to return to work on the Chamber's terms.[8]

1* meeting in Turffontein Hotel (The Star 8.2.1922)
2* Rand Daily Mail 4.2.1922
3* ibid 6.2.1922
4* ibid 8.2.1922
5* ibid
6* The Star 9.2.1922
7* ibid
8* Rand Daily Mail 10.2.1922

This dangerous tendency led to a hurried meeting of the combined executives of all the unions affiliated to the S.A.I.F that were on strike. In the New Trades Hall in Johannesburg on 9.2.1922 a resolution that "the Joint Executives advocate that the strikers should stand fast" w s passed, and it was decided to hold meetings throughout the strike area for the purpose of "enlightening and encouraging the men." As a further precaution "the members of the Joint Executives have decided to attend such meetings to press home to everyone concerned the necessity of remaining solid."[1] Speakers at these meetings called for patience, non-violence and solidarity.[2]

The Augmented Executive further fought back against dissenters by getting the daily meeting in the Johannesburg Town Hall to express "confidence and faith in our leaders, the Augmented Executive ...(we) approve of their action in not calling a general strike ... we prefer to eat grass than ... work under the ... diabolical conditions set forth by the Chamber of Mines"[3] Other bodies of strikers rallied to the sorely tried Augmented Executive. A general meeting in Germiston resolved unanimously to "stand firm until definate instructions are given by ... leaders to return to work,"[4] and a Krugersdorp Town Hall meeting resolved to "stand fast".[5] Even notoriously weak Witbank resolved to return to work only on the S.A.I.F. terms.[6] The S. A. Amalgamated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association decided to stand fast and fight on,[7] and the Reduction Workers, at branch meetings at Springs, Krugersdorp, Benoni and Johannesburg, passed votes of confidence in the leaders and resolved to hold on until the strike had been declared off officially.[8]

Just as trade unionism was pulling itself together again, General Smuts hit it with a force that threatened to rend it from top to bottom, when he brought in police to protect scabs

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1* Rand Daily Mail 10.2.1922
2* The Star 11.2.1922
3* Rand Daily Mail 11.2.1922
4* Ibid 13.2.1922
5* Ibid
6* The Star 14.2.1922
7* Ibid
8* Ibid

and requested the re-opening of the gold mines.

The Augmented Executive considered this to be a challenge which they had to accept[1], and they did so by utterly rejecting Smuts' plea, by organising giant rallies at the Union Ground for the Johannesburg area, at Brakpan for the East Rand strikers and at Krugersdorp for the West Rand.[2] From many platforms appeals went out to the men not to scab.[3] Bo[illegible]ll told a Town Hall crowd that they must be loyal to their leaders.[4] But of the measures taken to fight Smuts the most important was the regimenting of the commandos to stop scabbing. A "big pull" was planned for the day on which the mines were to be re-opened on Smuts' appeal. On the previous day H. Shuttleworth, of the Augmented Executive, told the Johannesburg Town Hall crowd that at daybreak they had to patrol every mine and see that none of the scabs got back. Forced to extremism by Smuts' action, he suggested that the scabs should be stopped regardless of police protection, and said that scabs should be put in cages, presumably for exhibition.[5]

Smuts had no intention of allowing picketting to save the strike. The police were out on the same morning, picking up and lodging in goal any pickets they could find, and arresting a few innocent bystanders into the bargain.[6] By 5 p.m. the West Rand and central areas of the Rand had been cleared of pickets. Prominent trade unionists like H.E.Morgan, president of the Reduction Workers, were jailed for contravening Section II (b) of the Riotous Assemblies Act.[7] The result was that by 15.2.1922, picketting had "almost ceased to exist as a factor in the present strike situation."[8] In place of picketting, Thompson told strikers to "never cease to talk to those who are a little weak."[9]

Picketting had been generally regarded as a legitimate

1* meeting in Trades Hall (R.D.Mail 13.2.1922)
2* The Star 13.2.1922
3* e.g. Opollo Theatre, Germiston (The Star 13.2.22), Benoni meeting (Sunday Times 19.2.22) etc.etc.
4* R.D.Mail 13.2.1922
5* ibid
6* R.D.Mail 14.2.1922
7* The Star 14.2.1922
8* R.D.Mail 15.2.1922
9* ibid 3.3.1922

strike weapon, and no one was naive enough to believe that rough workmen would use nothing but sweet didactic persuasion when on picketting duty. The application of the Riotous Assemblies Act was therefore considered by many as state partisanship on the side of the Chamber of Mines.[1*] Many strikers must have become convinced of the ultimate failure of the strike in these circumstances, but the immediate effect was not large scale scabbing.[2*] Benoni and Brakpan were so sure of the loyalty of their strikers that they scorned to have pickets anyway.[3*] After the wholesale arrests, pickets were removed from the immediate vicinity of the mines but "they appear to be vigilant from a safer distance."[4*] Tactics were changed to meet new conditions, and strike breakers were visited at their homes on an increased scale.[5*]

Police protection did encourage some previously timid souls to go back to work, but the response to Smuts' plea was far less than had been expected. Perhaps 500 to 1,000 strikers had returned by 18.2.1922.[6*] Some strikers remained out because of loyalty to their fellows, though their livelihood was in the balance if they did not go back.[7*] Others signed on and then withdrew when they saw that there was no general return, and that they might be isolated from the mass of their fellows.[8*] Mass meetings continued to pass motions of "absolute confidence in the Augmented Executive and its terms", even as late as 2.3.22[9*]

But the position of trade unionism gradually deteriorated. The Members of the Reduction and Surface Workers' Association were in touch with the mine managements and were trying to influence their fellows to return to work, the general secretary, J. George, was obliged to confess.[10*] On the coal fields men "were

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1* Some strikers were arrested under Section 8 of Act No.2 of 1914.
2* Hendrikz might have discouraged some by saying that if scabs went back, those essential workers who yet remained on the mines would be withdrawn (R.D.Mail 15.2.1922)
3* The Star 14.2.1922
4* ibid
5* Sunday Times 19.2.1922
6* "The Red Revolution and the Rand" (article)
7* Knights Central meeting (R.D.Mail 14.2.1922)
8* The Star 14.2.1922. This happened to some Engine Drivers on the West Rand
9* Roodepoort meeting (The Star 2.3.22)
10* Sunday Times 19.2.1922

wavering a little ...we keep sending out men to buck them up a bit," said an Augmented Executive member.[1] The strike began to crumble on its geographical edges. The Vereeniging branch of the Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association returned to work for a short while. They were soon back again on strike, and after a meeting stated rather unconvincingly that they had returned to work under a misapprehension.[2] On the West Rand five reduction workers voted against loyalty to the Augmented Executive at a meeting of their association.[3]

The Chamber of Mines was not slow to notice and benefit from these signs of crumbling. To make the disintegration of the trade union movement the more rapid and certain, the mine managements re-commenced mining and milling operations, thereby seeming to substantiate their claim that they were able to run the mines profitably without the strikers who still remained out. The S.A.I.F. leaders said that this resumption was just for show,[4] and that nothing was really being produced. But the strikers had too much at stake to be thus persuaded not to worry. If the mines could be run without them, 20,000 White mine workers would be on the dole, without employment or the hope of employment. They would not be on strike any longer. They would just be unemployed. There was a common belief, expounded above, that the Chamber of Mines wanted to replace White mine workers completely. The officials as a body had shown that they had no intention of stopping the mines in protest against Black replacing White, and any individual White mine official who protested against that tendency was sacked.[5] In addition, the White people of South Africa had shown no real concern for the fate of the White mine workers, and the Black mine workers would be only to keen to get advancement.

1* Sunday Times 19.2.1922
2* Rand Daily Mail 22.2.1922
3* ibid
4* J. George to Johannesburg Town Hall meeting (The Star 16.2.22)
* Naysmith at Vogelfontein meeting (R.D.Mail 6.3.1922)
5* e.g. at Roodepoort United Main Reef Gold Mine where a mine captain and five officials were discharged for refusing to carry out 'scab' duties. S.A.I.F. statement (The Star 18.2.22)

In the face of this desperate threat, even the law loving Colonel Creswell supported some form of 'coercion'[1*], and workers' meetings passed resolutions declaring that they had to oppose the acts of the Chamber of Mines "in the only way open to us,"[2*] though they did not specify what this was. The strike leader, Joe Thompson, however, said at the great strike demonstration on the Union Ground, Johannesburg, attended by 10,000 on 15.2.1922, that the workers were prepared to ~~b~~ bow to law and order[3*] whether they were treated justly or unjustly.

It was at this stage that so many of the strikers, even within the Augmented Executive, placed their hope in a general strike. But the general strike was a fiasco, and only surrender or violence remained. When sporadic violence did increase to such an extent that the declaration of Martial Law was a matter of time, the trade union leaders who were too involved in the extremist side of the strike to wash their hands successfully, and those who would follow whatever the consequences, now that they could not lead[4*], accepted violence as better than surrender and encouraged preparation to meet Martial Law.[5*] Unable to repudiate the strike movement, members of the Augmented Executive had no choice but to fight on although they were no longer in power, with as much reserve as possible as constitutionally as the circumstances of the time permitted, passively or with violence, and they were swept like corks on a wave towards revolt. Joe Thompson was a lone and lost voice trying to keep the strike a constitutional trade union movement.[6*]

In the days immediately preceeding the outbreak of organised violence on 10.3.1922, no one knew who was at the head of the strikers.[7*] The truth is that no one really was. The Augmented Executive had been shown to be a powerless figurehead by the

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1* At Pretoria Town Hall meeting (Sunday Times 19.2.1922)
2* Germiston meeting (The Star 18.2.1922)
3* Rand Daily Mail 16.2.1922
4* The International. Comment 15.3.1922
5* Jimmy Green urged the strikers to make arrangements for their lines of communications, and food supplies (R.D.Mail 2.3.22)
6* On 8.3.1922 he demanded that strikers stop assaulting Natives (Rex vs. R.B. Erasmus)
7* R.D.Mail leader 8.3.1922

manner in which it had been forced to consent to the general strike. A plot among a group of commando leaders was coming to fruition. But to the public, the strikers appeared to be led by a collection of hotch potch hotheads, and the strike appeared to be in disunion and confusion, disintegration and collapse.[1*]

In 1922 the terms socialist, communist, Bolshevist and Labourite were closely interlinked and even on occasions fused, at least in the public mind. In a mining area like the Rand, only a few purists worried about ideologies, and the great majority used whatever name tag suited the time and their mood, and the type of fight they were putting up for the working man. Bolshevism, for e instance, tended to be communism in action, while communism tended to be theoretical Bolshevism, and socialism was watered down communism. Generally, socialism was taken by the ordinary miner to mean national control of the mining industry,[2*] while Bolshevism meant the overthrow of the capitalist magnates and "their friends" the Smuts government by force.[3*] But sometimes militant Labour alone meant that.[4*] Not everyone who wanted the mines to be nationalised or in another way taken from the Chamber of Mines were socialists. Many believed that the Chamber's members were running the mines inefficiently and wastefully, with falling wages and cuts in employment as a consequence.[5*] They argued that the mines were not, in terms of a South African Republic law, the absolute property of the share-holders, but that mining leases were given only on the condition that the mines would be run properly.[6*] Then many who wanted to have the mines nationalised said that they were patriotic and didn't like seeing South African gold enriching continental swindlers in London.[7*]

1* See R.D.Mail 7.3.1922. At Witbank the strike had fizzled out completely by 8.3.1922 and the police there could be sent to the Rand (The Star 8.3.1922)
2* De Volksblad 16.1.1922
3* Trade unionist G. Clarke (R.D.Mail 26.1.1922)
4* Klerksdorp meeting (R.D.Mail 21.1.1922)
5* A.E. Smith "The Shamer of Mines" page 47.
6* De Volksblad 6.2.1922
7* (Rex vs. J.T.Terblanche)

Among the leaders there were some who had their theory straight - these varied from moderate socialists to extreme socialists - and some who did not.[1*] A moderate trade unionist like Archie Crawford, general secretary of the S.A.L.F., was detested by the Bolshevik clique, the Council of Action. Cases of this sort could be multiplied.[2*] The result was lack of unity in the trade union ranks.[3*] Some, like Crawford, wanted to give concessions; others, like Hendrikz, wanted the darth. Some, like Thompson, wanted the Curlewis Conference to succeed; others like Kentridge wanted it to collapse.[4*]

Generally, among leaders and led, socialism on the Rand was predominantly a local product to meet the workers' complaints of the time.[5*] The workers resented the discrepancy of wages between themselves and the salaried employees.[6*] In negotiations the workers' leaders were embittered by the advantages which the Chamber of Mines representatives enjoyed - the strikers' leaders had to rush from shift to attend meetings, while the Chamber's representatives were all full time, trained negotiators, many of them lawyers.[7*]

The strike was not called to defend socialistic or Labour principles. The strikers were against working conditions much more than they were against private mine ownership. Many asked for no more than that a miner should be assured of a reasonable wage as long as he did his job to the best of his ability.[8*] Smuts oversimplified the reasons why the various groups of workers went on strike, but there was a lot of truth in his treatment of the strike as a fight for better working conditions, whether through a clearing up of a working agreement, in the case of the employees of the Engineers and Founders' Association, or

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1* A strike leader was addressing a meeting on socialism. "Are you quoting from Marx," shouted someone. "Oh!" said the speaker, "I didn't know that Sammy Marx (a Rand businessman) wrote a book!"
2* Extremists prevented Crawford from speaking at meetings. (R.D. Mail 25.2.1922)
3* The Star 11.2.1922
4* Kentridge said that its collapse was "one of the best things that could have happened." (Cape Times 31.1.1922)
5* Labourites in Cape Town supported the government. Those on the Rand toyed with republicanism.
6* Union Ground resolution (R.D.Mail 16.2.22)
7* The Star 26.1.1922
8* Rand Daily Mail 9.1.1922

higher wages, in the case of the V.F.P. employees, or a cut in wages, in the case of the coal miners, or against arbitrary treatment of workers, in the case of the gold mine workers.[1]

While the strike leaders all wanted better conditions for the workers, they were divided on how these better conditions were to be obtained - through force or constitutional pressure, through nationalisation or complete equality of income - at a time when division meant loss of power. It could also mean a loss of public support, as when a number of trade unions leaders were implicated in an attempt to create a republic in early February. The public of the Rand was weary of threats of violence "which are uttered the moment any considerable industrial despute arises on the Rand."[2] The republic business made a bad impression everywhere. The Cape Times remarked: "If it is not intended to be the prelude to forcible resistance to constituted authority on the Rand - and a high degree of charity is required to acquit those who framed the resolution of that intention - the effect upon the men who are beginning to feel the pinch of the strike will certainly be calamitous."[3] What was more alarming was that Waterston had stressed that the resolution was no ill-considered or spontaneous decision, but the product of serious thought. The aim was to win recruits so that "when the day came" there would be as little slaughter as possible.[4] This was only technically different from preaching violence.

Trade union leaders blew now hot, now cold, as the chances of success, and the dangers, of strong methods increased or decreased.[5] After the republic resolution fiasco, many trade unionists made a general scurry towards the safety of constitutionalism, and never burnt their fingers again.[6]

1* Smuts in the House of Assembly 21.2.1922 Hansard
2* Rand Daily Mail leader 7.2.1922
3* Cape Times 30.1.91922
4* The Star 7.3.1922
5* This will be later enlarged on.
6* Hicks and Pohl (The Star 10.2.1922), Waterson (R.D.Mail 8.2.1922), Hendrikz at Potchefstroom meeting (Star 9.2.1922) Stewart M.L.A. at Witbank (R.D.Mail 9.2.1922)

But others were not so wary, and joined in an attempt to go to the mines and "pull out" the scabs, a plan that was clearly illegal. Owing to lack of organisation, and spirit, and the dislike of many strikers for illegal methods, the plan fell through.[1*] Denials that such a scheme had ever been in existance were made but rumour had it that the organising committee of the "big pull" was sacked.[a1*]

Soon the controlling group in the Augmented Executive were taking their chances again. After the Curlewis Conference the executive gave powers to the various strike committees in the many towns of the Rand to take whatever action they pleased - in fact invited them to break the law, if necessary, to prevent scabbing and other anti-strike tendencies.[2*] M Kentridge M.L.A., applauded this "resolution permitting action on the part of the militant section" and the "decision to take action against the government."[3*]

The temptation was great to apply an even-handed justice rather than legality, especially as the law seemed to be on the side of the financiers.[4*] Thus G. Brown said that the strikers should not pay their rents,[5*] while J. George told the strikers that they could not afford to neglect any weapon which would help them to win.[6*]

Generally, however, the trade union leaders made dutiful appeals to the workers not to commit violence, but these appeals often came after such militant speeches that they lost their force.[7*] Appeals for non-violence were usually given a practical basis. B. Pohl said "It would be fatal to the success of the strike to alienate public sympathy."[8*] Garrell warned that immediately violence was used "then Martial Law will

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1* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
2* The Star 8.2.1922
3* Rand Daily Mail 9.2.1922
4* Col. Creswell (R.D.Mail 18.2.1922)
5* Labour rally in Johannesburg Town Hall (The Star 30.1.22)
6* Coronation Park, Krugersdorp, meeting (R.D.Mail 18.2.22)
7* A leader would say "We are fighting for our lives. We are fighting for our children" and then appeal for gentle methods of striking. (E.S. Mayrath (The Star 11.1.1922)
8* Oddfellows Hall, Jeppe (R.D.Mail 20.1.1922)

a1* ibid

be proclaimed, and we will be tied hand and foot", and Naysmith offered the same thought.[1*]

Bolshevism played a considerably less part in the 1922 labour agitation, and in the outbreak of violence, than was made out by the Press and government immediately after the revolt was crushed. Then the affair was popularily called a "Bolshevik Uprising" and a "Red Revolt", and these names stuck. The citizens of the Rand, having previously heard hardly anything about Bolshevism in their midst, were astounded. Socialism among the Rand mine workers was well known, as was socialism generally, it having been a world force for decades. But people did not know that a small Bolshevik group had been striving for control of the strike.[2*]

At the time of the strike, the active Bolsheviks on the Rand all belonged to the body called the Council of Action.[3*] This Council of Action had been formed by a group of workers who had organised a strike at the Langlaagte Mine in February, 1921, against the wishes of the S.A.I.F., and who for their pains had been fined and suspended from holding trade union office by the S.A.Mine Workers Union.[4*] The Council of Action had strong associations with the Communist Party of South Africa, which had branches in Cape Town and in Johannesburg. A number of men were members of both organisations. The members of the Council of Action were almost all also members of the S.A.Mine Workers Union.

The 1922 strike was an obvious opportunity for the Council of Action to extend its influence, for at a time of crisis the Bolshevik doctrine of direct action,[5*] its heady talk of equal pay for all, and sharing in profits,[6*] its bull-at-a-gate pro-

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1* meeting in West Krugersdorp (R.D.Mail 24.1.22) Naysmith at S.A.I.F. meeting (R.D.Mail 13.2.22)
2* interview with reporter. Rand Daily Mail 24.2.1922
3* Its original members were J. Wordingham, E. Shaw, W. Richardson, K.J. van Coller, M. Higgins, R. Annets, F.W.Pate, A.McDermid, D. McPhail and H. Spendiff. (Martial Law Comm. para 126)
4* "The Outbreak on the Witwatersrand" page 34.
5* Martial Law Commission 1922 para 151.
6* The objects of the Council of Action were in a pamphlet entitled "The Abolishment of Capitalism and the Establishment of the control of Industry for the Worker" (MANIFESTO OF THE Mine Workers' Council of Action p.5)

gramme was more welcome to rough and ready miners than were the negotiating tactics of the Augmented Executive. This was especially true when negotiations broke down. Once moderation was seen to have little future, the Bolsheviks had a ready-made ideology and organisation to lead the workers. That so few strikers followed this lead indicates how little Communism had penetrated the mass of workers.

Immediately the strike began, the members of the Council of Action swung into activity. On 11.1.1922 police chief Col. Trigger warned the Augmented Executive of the "dangerous nature of the activities of the Council of Action and the prominent part they are taking in the strike."[1] At about the same time the Council of Action wrote to the "Rand Daily Mail", suggesting a solution to industrial troubles. "All wages should be equal, no man getting more than another, and any profits made should directly benefit the workers equally."[2] The Council held its own meetings each lunch hour in front of the Johannesburg Town Hall,[3] and for some weeks was unsuccessful in its attempts to address the 2,000 big crowd which met each day in the Town Hall. However, on 23.1.1922, when the Town Clerk had addressed the meeting and the audience was starting to go, Spendiff, "of the Council of Action of the Miners' Union, requested the gathering to remain seated. 'We will have a strike meeting now' and he took the chair." This done, two of his fellows, W.P.Fisher "and a Springs representative" addressed the meeting. "The Springs representative exhorted the men to support the (Council of Action)...pointing to the issue as against the 'capitalist class'". Fisher then criticised the attitude of earlier speakers that sides should not be taken. "He demurred - it was a question of either supporting the exploiters of the workers or giving solid support to the men themselves."[4].

1* "Comrade Bill" page 244
2* Rand Daily Mail 11.1.1922
3* The Star 17.1.1922
4* Account in Rand Daily Mail 24.1.1922

But the Council of Action was little heeded while there was hope of victory by negotiation, and so was virtually without influence until after the Curlewis Conference had broken down.

Then, by decree of the Augmented Executive, the members of the Council of Action were instated again as full trade unionists, allowed again to stand for office like any other union members.[1] What caused the Augmented Executive to give such freedom within the trade union movement at such a critical time to such dubious friends remains a mystery.[2] Perhaps the members of the Augmented Executive had been lulled from watchfulness by the clever tactics of the Communist Party, which had been holding meetings in the Cape Town City Hall in support of the Rand strikers.[3] Perhaps the Augmented Executive was attempting to win the support of the members of the Council of Action. Perhaps there were a sufficient body of neo-Bolsheviks in the Augmented Executive to swing the undecided.

Among other liberties, the members of the Council of Action were now free to speak at public meetings of strikers. On 2.2.1922, a leading Bolshevist, Spendiff, was actually a nominated S.A.I.F. speaker at the daily meeting in the Johannesburg Town Hall. Spendiff called the employers "parasites", and put forward a demand "for all the time we are out on strike we demand our day's pay." When the cheering died down, he suggested a conference of the working class to come to some understanding on what they wanted and how theywere going to get it. This was an obvious attempt to undermine the S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive. The Bolshevist then broadly hinted that force against the government might eventually be necessary.[4] The Augmented Executive did not again nominate Bolshevik speakers. Rather, as the Bolshevik doctrines of direct force became so popular, the S.A.I.F. first decided to supply all

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1* The Star 28.1.1922
2* The minutes of the particular meeting were not available to the writer.
3* Cape Times 3.2.1922
4* Rand Daily Mail 2.2.1922

speakers at public meetings from people approved by itself in the future[1], and then the Augmented Executive even went so far as to try to stop the Council of Action from holding its own private meetings in front of the Johannesburg Town Hall each lunch hour.[2]

The Augmented Executive was unable, however, to throw off the fraternal embrace of the Bolsheviks, although these extremists were dangerous to the trade unionist policy of keep-within-the-law, and hampered negotiations with the government and the Chamber of Mines. This was largely because so many of the leading trade unionists and Labourites agreed with the methods of mil[illegible]t communism. A town councillor could say in the Johann[illegible] Town Council Chamber "Do you think that I am going to be [illegible]ted to by the Bolsheviks sitting in Goldrichs' Buildin[illegible] S.A.I.F. headquarters)?", and everyone knew immediate[illegible]at he meant.[3] The whole trade union movement was so riddled with neo-Bolshevism that a Member of Parliament was later convinced, he said, that the whole object of the strike had been a Communist revolution.[4]

In early February the propaganda efforts of the Bolsheviks began to bear fruit. The "Sunday Times" spoke of a "new form of strike agitation" and of "deliberate attempts to stir up rebellion".[5] The Star warned: "There are irresponsibles abroad today who imagine that a revolution of some kind can be carried out in South Africa."[6] They did not know that the men concerned were not irresponsible, but a group who did not mind the prospect of losing a rebellion, so long as bitterness was fermented between worker and capitalist.[7]

Struggling to find footholds on the ladder to the control

1* Rand Daily Mail 13.2.1922
2* ibid 24.2.1922
3* ibid 25.1.1922
4* Webber, House of Assembly 23.2.1922 Hansard.
5* Sunday Times 5.2.1922
6* The Star 6.2.1922
7* Martial Law Inquiry 1922. para 152 .

of the strike, the Bolsheviks were helped by the strikers' attempt to get a republic in early February. Though the Bolshevists had no part in the making of the "republic resolution", they used its acceptance by the Johannesburg Town Hall crowd up to the hilt. Council of Action members E. Shaw and P. Fisher were elected onto the deputation which the strikers sent to 'Roos' Parliament' in Pretoria. At the deputations' meeting with the Nationalists, Fisher and Shaw spoke forth eagerly. Shaw told the meeting that there could be no peace until all power had been taken from the Chamber of Mines, while Fisher stated that there was no alternative but bloodshed on the Reef.[1]

The police had been watching these Bolsheviks and listening to their demagogy. ‡ On 8.2.1922 the more prominent members of the Council of Action, Fisher, Wordingham, Spendiff and McDermid were arrested.[2] The charge was that of endangering the public peace. As the public prosecutor S. Elliott said: "If their alleged advice had been followed, violence would have taken place."[3]

That the violent talk of the Bolshevists had already won much popular support was shown by the scenes of fury and excitement which took place when their arrest was announced to the daily Johannesburg Town Hall meeting. A resolution was put to the meeting of 2,000 strikers that "this mass meeting requests the ... S.A.I.F. to ... demand the release of the comrades ... The whole audience ... electrified with excitement ...rose in a body to indicate their approval ... Sticks and Hats were waved in the air."[4]

The five Bolsheviks were incarcerated in the Johannesburg Fort, a martyrdom which greatly aided their cause. A commando marched to the Fort, 1,600 strikers strong, and lustily sung

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1* The Star 7.2.1922
2* Rand Daily Mail 9.2.1922
3* ibid 10.2.1922
4* The Star 9.2.1922

the "Red Flag", besides giving five rounds of cheers, one for each prisoner.[1*] The Bolsheviks, so recently the outcasts of trade unionism, became heroes overnight because they were workers who had been imprisoned for their part in the strike. Resolutions were passed all along the Reef demanding their release.[2*] Members of the Council of Action who had not been arrested, like W.H. Andrews, took over the task of inciting to violence.[a*] Andrews, general secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa, called for "the law and order - Martial Law if they liked - of the working classes."[3*] He, too, was soon clapped into prison, the day after he had dared to quote: "Twice armed is he who hath his quarrel just. But treble armed is he who gets his blow in first."[4*]

General surprise was felt when the whole group, Fisher, Wordingham, Spendiff, McDermid, Andrews, Shaw, Prior, Van Zyl and Ryan (the last four having been arrested separately) were released on 22.2.1922.[5*] They had obtained their release on a technicality.

Immediately they held a meeting in front of the Johannesburg Town Hall, and before the largest crowd they had ever addressed at a lunch hour meeting,[6*] they preached a pleasing doctrine of workers appointing their own mine managers, mine captains and shift bosses, and of the control of all industries being by the people for the benefit of the community as a whole.[7*]

As the Augmented Executive was now in discredit among the strikers, the members of the Council of Action were able to attack it with much more openness than previously.[8*] By 4.3.1922, the members of the Council of Action were denying the authority of the Augmented Executive to act for the strikers.[9*] And on the

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1* Rand Daily Mail 10.2.1922
2* e.g. Germiston strike meeting (The Star 14.2.1922) Krugersdorp strike meeting (The Star 16.2.1922)
3* Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 117
4* ibid para 118
5* ibid para 118
6* Rand Daily Mail 23.2.1922
7* ibid
8* The S.A.I.F. general secretary at this stage said: "The Council of Action are out for the control of the trade union movement." To Town Hall meeting (R.D.Mail 24.2.1922)
9* The Star 4.2.1922

next day W.H. Andrews attacked the Augmented Executive, telling the Johannesburg Town Hall meeting, "This is what you have been brought to by the sitting tight policy of the law and order party." In its place he offered the policy of the Council of Action. "What is wanted is a definative concrete suggestion of an aggressive nature. Even if you fail, you will not be any worse off than under present conditions."[1*]

At this stage the Council of Action appeared to some observers to be in control of the strike movement. The Town Hall crowd accepted its criticism of the Augmented Executive,[2*] the district strike committees and the individual commandos were listening to the extremists. By 9.3.1922 the Star commented that "the violent section would appear to have eliminated the others."[3*]

However, the Council of Action never looked like running the 22,000 strikers. The strike movement had disintegrated to such an extent by the time the Bolsheviks got their chance that no one could pull more than a fraction of organisation out of the confusion. But the Council of Action had a good try. Fisher for one realised that the commando movement would assume a major importance when violence broke out. The commandos, consisting of bodies of armed, disciplined and organised men, were the only groups on the strike side capable of fiercely resisting the government and making the quelling of this strike a vastly different affair to the quelling of previous Rand strikes The commandos were the strikers' private army. So the Council of Action set about agitating publically for a solidation of the commando movement, and tried to co-ordinate the various strike commandos' officers into a general staff.[4*]

Percy Fisher made a strong bid to get control of the

1* The Sunday Times 5.3.1922
2* The Star 6.3.1922
3* ibid 9.3.1922
4* Rex vs. R.B. Erasmus. Also Union Ground rally. (R.D. Mail 2.3.1922)

1* The Sunday Times 5.3.1922
2* The Star 6.3.1922
3* ibid 9.3.1922
4* Rex vs. R.B. Erasmus. Als
2.3.1922)

commandos, but the commando 'generals' and 'commandants', who were mostly Afrikaans miners, would have none of it.[1] To overcome prejudice against Bolshevists, the Council of Action had brought into existance a new body, the Committee of Action, which it controlled. Fisher's attempt to get control of the commandos, and his failure, are evident from a document later found in the Trades Hall in Johannesburg. In Fisher's handwriting is written: "The Committee of Action is in full control of all the commandos." This is crossed out, and below it Fisher wrote: "The Committee of Action is hereby authorised to act in conjunction with all commandants of the commando movement."[2]

And that was as close as the Council of Action ever got to controlling the strike in 1922.

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1. "Comrade Bill" page 272
2. Ibid page 273

UNREASONABLENESS AND REASON

Chapter V

This chapter is basically about the relations between the workers, who sent on strike, and their employers. Misunderstand-ings and unreasonableness complicated these relations. Unreasonableness exists in nearly every historical situation, and the temptation is to "take it as read". Yet the amount of unreasonableness varies from situation to situation, and its quantity is as measurable as other ingredients which go into the making of an historical event. The word unreasonableness implies a judgement in terms of values presumed to be valid. Therefore the values must be those of the parties involved in the historical situation. If parties offend against reason, the offence must be against the very interest for which they are striving.

In 1922 both the Chamber of Mines and the trade unions were against a strike, and they were against a lengthy continuation of a strike, which would be costly all round. Neither side could hope to win an outright victory. "If the miners win, they lose" because the low grade mines, which could not be run economically on the old conditions would have to be shut, throwing into unemployment half of the White mine workers. "If the mining companies win, there is a grave possibility that the public will lose" since a guarantee was needed "that the reduction of costs will not be pushed too far at the expense of the White community on the Rand, and of White South Africa as a whole." [1] - a situation which the government could not allow.

When the strike did break out, both parties wanted to end it quickly, but negotiations proved difficult. "Labour with the rich mines in its mind's eye ...the companies with the poor mines in their mind's eye ... being on different planes they never meet and cannot do so." [2] Compromise from both sides was necessary, but unreasonable demands held them apart. At the

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1. Rand Daily Mail editorial 13.1.1922
2. Letter by "Junius" to the Cape Times 19.1.1922

beginning of the strike both sides wanted too much. The Chamber of Mines refused to negotiate over the Status Quo Agreement because it wanted "maximum efficiency"[1]. The S.A.I.F. would accept no proposed method of reducing running costs on the mines, and some of its members, in their more intransigent moods, would see the low grade mines closed up first.[2]

The employers and the employees viewed the gold mining industry differently. The Chamber of Mines took the long term view of its prosperity: it had sufficient reserves to be able to think in terms of the distant future. The workers, a well paid but a free spending lot, were concerned mainly with next week's food and rent, and the call to them to take the long term view - that retrenchment of men would reduce expenses, leading to greater profits, leading to expansion of the industry leading to re-employment of the retrenched men - did not explain what was to happen to the retrenched men in the months and perhaps years intervening in this cycle.[3]

The immediate cause of the strike was a prize piece of unreasonableness, the Chamber of Mines' "ultimatum"[4], which was caused mainly by panic. It was a mistake efor the Chamber to throw before the trade unions a yes-no proposition while negotiations were going on.

The Chamber of Mines panicked because, while negotiations were dragging on in the closing months of 1921, a further sharp drop in the price of gold in December from 103s.2d. to 98s., produced a crisis by placing a number of mines in an actual position of non-payability.[5] Sandwiched between the dropping price of gold, and rising production costs, the working profit of the mines had been rapidly declining.[5] The Chamber of Mines

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1* The Star 25.3.1922
2* Hendrikz (R.D.Mail 31.1.1922) Lewis (The Star 26.1.1922)
3* Mine manager H.R. Hill for one spoke glibly along these lines (R.D.Mail 25.2.1922)
4* Smuts thought it "truesque", [illegible] he told the Nationalist M.L.A.s in Pretoria (R.D.Mail 9.2.1922)
5* The Financial Times 12.1.1922. De Volksblad 15.1.1922 Chamber of Mines executive Gemmill (The Star 26.1.1922)

complained: "The trade unions had not put up a single important proposal to meet the position ... when the crisis came ... the Chamber had no alternative but to take steps towards bringing into force its proposals."[1*] The Chamber's fear that the gold premium would soon disappear was supported by such an authority as the governor of the S.A. Reserve Bank, who said that "it looks as if, long before June 1923 arrives ... sterling will reach parity with gold"[2*] In 1921 only 12 of the Rand's 39 mines showed a profit greater than the premium. Unless working costs were reduced, it seemed, 27 min were faced with extinction. Frightened by these statistics, the Chamber of Mines overstated its case, and worked itself up into a panic.[3*] In this state of nerves it sent out the "ultimatum" which, said Boydell, created an attitude of enmity which only its withdrawal could end.[4*]

But if the "ultimatum" was largely a panic measure, so was the strike declaration. The strike was declared when the S.A.I.F. had not yet tried a number of avenues of negotiation. Instead of tapping every sympathy of government and public, the trade unionists rushed into a strike for which they were not prepared. They rushed into a blank wall. While the threat of a strike was useful to labour, a strike itself had every likelihood of being disastrous. By rushing into a strike, the trade unionists lost the mo al position which the autocratic action of the Chamber of Mines had given them. It had been possible to call the Chamber of Mines' notice a "declaration of war", but the same now applied to the strike.[5*] The Strike looked very much like a counter ultimatum because it was declared while the Chamber was still offering negotiation, while there was still a full month to run before the provisions of the

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1* Gemmill (The Star 26.1.1922)
2* A.C.Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of South Africa" article.
3* Col. Cresswell maintained this (Sunday Times 29.1.1922)
4* House of Assembly 21.2.1922 Hansard
5* Mr. Buckle at the Curlewis Conference (The Star 25.1.1922)

"ultimatum" would come into force,[1] and while recourse could be had by law to conciliation bodies.[2] Both sides had thus been overhasty in not appealing to the government first over their dispute. The strike declaration was no more a premeditated attempt by labour to dominate the Chamber of Mines, than the "ultimatum" was an attempt by the Chamber to destroy the trade unions.[3] The responsible trade unionists wanted a solution, not a submission. But they failed to take Parliament into their confidence. They might have put the workers' case to government arbitration, thus assuring future security, though temporary measures for the alleviation of the economic crisis on the mines might have been allowed by a state commission.[4] Instead the S.A.I.F. hastily decided on a war of exhaustion, in which the workers had little chance against the mine owners, having nothing like the same financial reserves. Parliament was naturally inclined towards the prosperity of the country as a whole. While that meant the continuation of the gold mines at the highest level of productivity, it did not necessarily mean the greatest prosperity possible for the individual White miner. It meant a tacit acceptance that the workers had to make sacrifices to keep the mines going. Which meant that either the workers had to make sacrifices, or else the economic structure of the Union had to change to socialism.[5] South Africa was not prepared to suffer such radical changes for the sake of 2,000 or at most 4,200 miners who had been threatened with retrenchment. On the other hand the country was not prepared to see the Rand become a Native location. Thus, even after the trade unionists had declared the strike, they still retained a great deal of sympathy in South Africa. They might have used

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1* Smuts remarked on this. House ofAssembly 18.2.1922 Hansard
2* House of Assembly Webber M.L.A. 23.2.1922 Hansard
3* The Chamber wished only to curb the awkward powers of the trade unions. For years it had been cooperating with the trade unions (Martial Law Commission 1922, para 91)
4* Graumann in House of Assembly 23.2.1922 Hansard.
5* Hicks (R.D.Mail 27.2.1922) and Kentridge (The Star 26.1.22) wanted nationalisation of the mines.

this sympathy by accepting arbitration through Parliament, but instead they allowed the control of the strike to fall largely into the hands of the extreme direct actionists, who had their own reasons to ferment trouble, and who were anathema to essentially bourgeois and farming South Africa. Once the strike leaders had decided to go the way alone, they could not help antagonising their friends.

Once the trade unionists, by striking, had spoilt their chances of a solution to the industrial dispute through Parliamentary arbitration, they should have logically tried to negotiate successfully with the Chamber of Mines. The basis for this was an acceptance that an economic crisis existed on the low grade mines. The Chamber of Mines said that it could do nothing while the trade unionists refused to accept the gold mining crisis. "It would be foolish and would actually amount to deception ... if the industry ... laid down as its basis for re-opening the mines, anything that would not give a fair chance to the bulk of the mines to continue operations," said a Chamber spokesman.[1]

It was not so much that the trade union leaders did not believe that the gold mining industry was in dire straits. But they were in a dilemma. They suspected the Chamber of exaggeration, and were right, as subsequent events showed. The mines were obviously in trouble, but to what extent they did not know, as they had only Chamber of Mines information. Joe Thompson, the strike leader, said that figures produced by the Technical Advisor of to the Chamber "left him stone cold"; they were so used to the figures produced by the Chamber being proved false.[2] Not knowing to what extent the Chamber's information was valid, the trade unionists were unwilling to admit that there was a crisis at all, since that would seem to be accepting the Chamber's facts. They were accused of refusing

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1. Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
2. A.C.Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of South Africa". The Cape Times thought that the Chamber should prove its case for retrenchment before it started sacking men. (Cape Times 30.1.22)

to face the facts frankly and honestly,[1] but they did not know what the facts really were. The Chamber did not give detailed and substantiated accounts to prove that the removal of the Status Quo Agreement was necessary.[2] The Chamber refused to allow the trade unionists to examine their financial accounts concerning either the gold or the coal mines, and the Chamber's refusal to go to arbitration where a competent arbitrator could assess the real seriousness of the economic crisis, turned the workers from suspicion to certainty that there was, to put it mildly, something fishy.[3]

When the Chamber of Mines, later in the strike, showed the exaggeration of its earlier protestations about not being able to give way one whit without the gold mining industry collapsing, by allowing the Status Quo Agreement to remain on the high grade mines pending a settlement, the S.A.I.F. could not back down so easily, because it had followers to think of, who had been convinced of the Chamber's duplicity, and would not understand the subtlities of negotiation. Besides, the strike leaders had been forced to work up the men against their employers[4] because the strikers had to be made to share their fear of what the Chamber might do if it got the thin edge into the wedge through the abolition of the Status Quo Agreement. As there was no clear cut case of wage reductions in the case of the gold mine workers, they had to be persuaded that the Chamber was mean enough to take advantage of any opening, before they would vote for a strike.

The trade unionists' refusal to accept that economic changes affecting them were necessary ruined their best chance of a reasonable settlement. This was when the Augmented Executive refused to accept the Chamber's offer of alterations on

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1• The Friend 7.2.1922, W. Gemmill in R.D.Mail 8.3.1922, etc.
2• The Chamber argued that there was no point in giving complete figures because the workers did not believe them anyway. (Sunday Times 19.2.1922)
3• Benoni meeting (R.D.Mail 22.2.1922)
4• Matthews at Benoni meeting, e.g. (The Star 11.1.1922)

the low grade mines only, until a final settlement was worked out with the men back at work. The low grade mines were in a bad way, but the Augmented Executive was not altogether to blame for not accepting that. The Chamber of Mines had invited disbelief in their statements about the low grade mines by their exaggerated plaints which sometimes pictured the magnates as philantropists running the mines for the good of the country and of the workers, and probably losing money by their devotion. Miners asked cynically why the Chamber was suddenly so patriotic, when in the past it had closed down many mines without concern for the national economy. In any case, said the miners, the magnates had made some mines low grade by taking out the rich ore indescriminately, so wasting the heritage of the workers.[1*] Why should the workers pay for what the magnates had done? The workers had been antagonised by the Chamber's earlier demand that the Status Quo Agreement should be abolished not only on the low grade mines, but on the high grade mines as well.[2*] There was no economic justification for this demand. The arguments which the Chamber put forward to justify their all-or-nothing demand, their refusal to differentiate between gold mines - that there was no precedent for discrimination between high and low grade mines, that the mines were as much the property of the share holders as a farm was that of the farmer[3*] - sounded smug and selfish in a time of depression and jitters. There was no real comparison between mine property and private property, either in the law or in the traditions of South Africa.[4*] The gold mining industry was unique and incomparable. The workers would never accept the mining industry as belonging entirely to the magnates and shareholders.[5*] "A man's business is his own and his own capital, but

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1* Germiston meeting resolution (The Star 2.2.1922)
1* This laid the Chamber open to the charge of using the crisis for exploitation (Randfontein meeting resolution R.D.Mail 13.1.22)
3* Mr. Buckle (R.D.Mail 28.1.1922)
4* R.H. Henderson House of Assembly 27.2.1922 Hansard
5* Strike leader Lewis (R.D.Mail 26.1.1922)

the gold belongs to the country."[1] When the Chamber eventually agreed that the Status Quo on the high grade mines should not be touched pending a settlement, this was explained as no solution but merely an offer made to satisfy Smuts and help South Africa.[2] No one was convinced, however, that the offer could not have been made earlier, when the chances of coming to an agreement over a negotiating table were much better.[3]

The determination of the workers to resist the nullification of the Status Quo was reinforced by their post war experience which seemed to indicate that wage reductions would never end. All the workers' sacrifices since the war had failed to stop the galloping crisis on the gold mines,[4] and they questioned if sacrifices on their part would ever suffice to solve the financial crisis on the mines,[5] or if demands would ever stop until their standard of wages had been reduced to Native level.[6] In mid-1921 mine workers' wages had been reduced when the cost of living allowance was cut, and general uneasiness was caused by a spate of wage cuts for other workers - railwaymen, Rhodesian mine workers - and rumours of wage cuts. These wage cuts came in a period when the working man was expecting a brave new world. Men who fought in the Great War had been promised that they would come back to better conditions, and instead they had come back to inflated prices. Many were restless because of soul disturbing war experiences, and they believed that somehow the world should change. The ancien regime of rich and poor was not easily accepted in the unsettled post war years,[8] especially since a socialist state had been set up in Russia. This Workers' State had a considerable effect, especially on the English-speaking workers, and constantly throughout the strike voices at workers' meetings

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1 • Hendrikz at Potchefstroom meeting (R.D.Mail 8.2.1922)
2 • Chamber of Mines representative (R.D.Mail 7.2.1922)
3 • The Star editorial 15.2.1922
4 • Since June, 1915. 17 mines, employing 3,600 Europeans, had closed down. The Star 17.2.1922
5 • The Chamber hoped to save £½ million on retrenchment, and £½ million on changes of the contract system. (A.C.Key)
6 • Rev. Mullineux M.L.A. at Krugersdorp meeting (The Star 18.1.22
8 • Bishop W. Carey (R.D.Mail 8.2.1922)

spoke of nationalisation, of a share in the profits, and of Bolshevism. The exciting new socialistic experiment in Russia made the capitalist system, stark and unsoftened by social schemes for workers, or heavy taxation, seem tyrannical.[1] The strikers did not like the idea behind the Chamber's "ultimatum" that the workers alone should bear the brunt of the fall in the gold premium. That sounded like yesterday's world when the working poor paid for everything. "I have often heard it said," said a letter writer to the Press, "that employees never share in the good things, though they are expected to assist in the bad."[2] The workers wanted the mines' shareholders and also the officials and salaried staff to share in bearing the brunt of the gold premium, and went so far as to suggest that if anyone should be retrenched, it should be the salaried staff.[3]

On top of the disappointment of vain hopes, of wage cuts and high prices, came the abolition of the Status Quo Agreement which opened the door for unlimited sacking of White men. In this atmosphere demogogues accused capitalism throughout the world of making a final bid to utterly subject the workers. South Africa was a segment of a world-wide plot, they said, and politicians sponsored this fear.[4]

Suspicion of the Chamber of Mines was easily fostered because the strike was only the culmination of long bitterness dating from the strikers' misfortunes in 1913, 1914, and before In the post war era the Chamber had refused to compromise during any dispute, and had a reputation for haughtiness and discourtesy in its dealings with the trade unions.[5] This autocratic attitude possibly arose because capital had not yet accustomed

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1* Rev. J. Mullineaux M.L.A. (R.D.Mail 16.2.1922)
2* letter by Junius (R.D.Mail 19.1.1922)
3* W.Price at Curlewis Conference (The Star 26.1.1922) Madeley in Johannesburg Town Hall (R.D.Mail 6.2.1922) It may be pointed out, though, that some miners were earning much more than officials (A.C.Key "Strike on the Gold Mines of South Africa")
4* Matthews at Curlewis Conference (R.D.Mail 27.1.1922) J. Little in Church Square, Pretoria. (The Star 30.1.1922) The London "Financial Times" called this rumour "hot air" in its edition of 4.2.1922.
5* The organisation of the mining industry had long been unsatisfactory, leading to discontent and resentment on the part of the "White Labour" (Dominions Royal Commission of 1913)

itself to look on labour as a partner in production. The "ultimatum"[1*] was an example of this attitude. Another example was the offence which the Chamber took when the trade unions refused to accept the critical position on the gold mines unreservedly.[2*] This led to a lofty unfriendliness and sometimes to an insulting attitude on the Chamber's part during the strike, which reached a climax in Gemmill's letter refusing to recognise the S.A.I.F. any longer. This letter shocked everyone,[3*] and later the Martial Law Commission listed it as one of the minor causes of the outbreak of violence.[4*] Other commentators went further, and argued that this letter turned the strikers from peaceful methods to violence.

The chances of success of the Curlewis Conference had been prejudiced because the Chamber of Mines' representatives were not prepared to accept the workers as equals in the negotiating room.[5*] The spirit of non-compromise and arrogance led to immediate disheartenment,[6*] and in its first day the conference narrowly escaped disintegration.[7*] It survived fitfully for two weeks, but the lack of progress led to a comment that "owing to the slow progress that the Conference is making, the Rand stands in some danger of being ruined by the effort to save it."[8*] Suggestions proving sterile, the delegates raked up the past,[9*] and interspersed dirty washing with near an insults. After 13 futile days, the Conference broke up. The workers were informed that the employers were entirely to blame,[10*] while the Chamber made a similar declaration of outraged purity.

Judge Curlewis, whose impartiality had impressed everyone, put forward suggestions, in the closing stages of the Conferen-

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1* Rood called it a declaration of war (The Star 23.1.1922)
2* leading member of the Chamber (R.D.Mail 31.1.1922)
3* Blackwell M.L.A. (R.D.Mail 7.3.1922), Smuts (The Star 7.3.22)
4* Martial Law Commission 1922(para 160)
5* The V.F.P.Company chairman, B. Price, called the Conference an "act of generousity" on the part of the employers (The Star 24.1.1922)
6* "We are further off than ever," said a delegate (R.D.Mail 18.1.1922)
7* The Star 18.1.1922
8* The Cape Times 23.1.1922
9* See Rand Daily Mail 24.1.1922, 25.1.1922, 26.1.1922.
10* By order of the Augmented Executive (The Star 28.1.1922)

ce, to end the strike.[1] These appeared practical and fair. The Chamber refused to accept these terms, although subsequently it agreed to the one point of Judge Curlewis which was the stumbling block at this time - the acceptance of the Status Quo remaining in force on the high grade mines at least temporarily.[2]

The circumstances of the breaking out of the strike had doomed the Conference to a large extent before it ever began, as a workers' delegate observed.[3] The repatriation of Native mine workers back to the reserves, and the loss of steam ship custom for the collieries' coal, created, as Sir Evelyn Wallers said, "a serious difficulty in coming to an arrangement."[4] The fact that the strike had broken out during employer-employee negotiations did not auger well for the Curlewis Conference. The strike leaders went into the Conference already sullen because of the unfriendly loftiness of the Chamber, and took the chance of meeting the mining chiefs face to face to let off steam which did not do the negotiations any good. J. George told the Chamber's delegates that they would "kill off any man if they could make sixpence" and "if they were not picking the pockets of the workers, then they were picking the pockets of the shareholders."[5] There was a good deal of talk from the strike side in this strain.

By seeking to impose new conditions on the workers in the "ultimatum" and at the Curlewis Conference, without concern for agreements or arbitration,[6] the Chamber of Mines indicated that it would not accept fully the principles which made trade unionism workable. This was a difficulty which trade unionism was continually facing. The Johannesburg Town Council and the public generally would not accept that the municipal employees, being affiliated to the S.A.I.F., had to fulfill their duties to

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1* Rand Daily Mail 26.1.1922
2* Buckle refuses Curlewis' terms (The Star 28.1.1922)
3* J. George at the Conference (R.D.Mail 25.1.1922)
4* Wallers at the Conference ibid
5* George at Curlewis Conference (R.D.Mail 26.1.1922)
6* S. van Lingen M.P.C., said that the cause of the strike was the refusal of the Chamber to accept arbitration (The Star 6.2.22)

trade unionism were ordered to do so, and go on strike, and it was no use telling them that they were well treated, or that they were ungrateful wretches. The old tradition of horse whipping one's employee if he did not do his job, and smartly, was dead but not forgotten, and outrageous solutions to the strike along those lines were put forward quite seriously.[1] In the Tramways and Lighting Committee it was argued that the Power House and Tramways employees who were paid off because of coal supplies being stopped, but who were not on strike, should not be paid.[2] Councillor Harris remarked: "It is impossible to leave out of consideration that the men who would suffer from th[illegible]nonpayment were a little while ago active participants in the ballot for a sympathetic strike."[3] The strikers were quite rightly infuriated by such an attitude.[4] But the crowning case of unreasonableness on the part of the employers came when the main trade union leaders Thompson and Matthews, who were both employees of the Johannesburg municipality, were ordered to return to work in the middle of February, or forfeit their jobs. Both men had taken unpaid, extended leave to run the strike. As they obviously could not leave 22,000 men halfway through a strike, they got the sack, much to the indignation of the strikers.[5]

Also intensely disliked were the "scare tactics" indulged in by the Chamber of Mines even while negotiations with the S.A.I.F. were taking place. These scare tactics were meant to undermine the confidence and unity of the workers. In the news columns of the daily Press, in half page advertisements, in pamphlets, some of which were misleading, in notices on mine boards, the Chamber of Mines attempted to cut from under the S.A.I.F. leaders their support from the mass of workers, and

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1* "Old Kimberley" (R.D.Mail 24.1.22), Brereton (The Star 26.1. 1922)
2* This matter came up in committee on 25.1.1922 (The Star 25.1. 1922) and on 1.2.1922 (R.D.Mail 2.2.1922)
3* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
4* Benoni meeting (The Star 8.2.1922)
5*. Sunday Times 12.2.1922

from the farmers. In the daily Press, Chamber of Mines spokesmen argued at the same time that the strike was having no effect on production[1], and that it was destroying the mines to such an extent that there would be no jobs for the men to come back to[2]. Both courses were well calculated to make the strikers panic. A typical Chamber of Mines advertisement, meant to stampede the men, read: "Do you realise that the men who go back (to work) first will naturally get preference when the mines restart?[3]" i.e. the strikers could be sure that at the end of the strike there would be discrimination which would amount to victimisation. Another way of giving the strikers gooseflesh was to publish the figures of the number of men who could not be found immediate employment because more than 40,000 Native mine workers had been sent back to the reserves.[4]

Between the Curlewis Conference and the declaration of the general strike in March, there was a steady deterioration of the relations between the strikers and the employers.[5] The failure to reach a compromise at the Curlewis Conference created a spiral of obstinacy on both sides, and led to increased bitterness and a growth of suspicion and mutual accusations which made more and more remote the possibility of agreement.[6] The Chamber of Mines was accused of driving the men into violence so that Martial Law could be declared and trade unionism could be crushed.[7] It was accused of "creating" low grade mines and "even turning some of the rich mines on the Far East Rand into low grade propositions."[8] Antagonism towards the Chamber of Mines grew visably: unconciliatory remarks and impossible demands were applauded by strike audiences.[9] The Chamber was menaced with violence unless it restarted the mines on pre-

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1* The Star 14.1.1922
2* Rand Daily Mail 25.1.1922
3* ibid 13.2.1922
4* that meant that 4,000 Whites could not be re-employed immediately (Sunday Times 19.2.1922)
5* The Chamber appears to have been humiliated because their conditions at the Conference were refused (W. Gemmill to Secretary of Mines and Industries R.D.Mail 2.3.1922)
6* T.A. Richard "Strike on the Rand" (article)
7* Johannesburg Town Hall meeting (R.D.Mail 22.2.1922)
8* Lewis (The Star 29.1.1922)
9* see next chapter

strike conditions[1], and the offer of intervention by the alarmed Underground Officials Association was spurned.[2] The Chamber, on its part, steadily increased the price it demanded for a settlement, and the single exception to this, the concession at Smuts' insistence in connexion with the low grade mines, was given with studied ungraciousness and rapidly withdrawn.[3] Workers interpreted this hardening attitude as a proof of "no desire on their (the employers) part to come to a settlement."[4] Gemmill, labour actuary of the Chamber, explained that this was not true, but "That the terms have hardened is perfectly true, and a little consideration will show that the longer the strike continues the more must they harden."[5] The Chamber announced that the workers' cost of living allowance would disappear by June, 1922. This was a serious blow which, trade unionists argued, brought the men's wages down to a lower purchasing power than before the war.[6] Then the Chamber decreed that the paid holidays on May Day and Dingaan's Day would be abolished. This was bitterly resented by the patriotic Labourites, and the Afrikaans workers, respectively.[7] Observers remarked that the sum saved would not compensate for the bitterness aroused.[8] The Rand Daily Mail described this action as a "silly and unnecessary pinprick."[9] Much more serious was the Chamber's decision to guarantee the ratio on the mines of 10.5 Natives to 1 White worker for two years only.[10] The White workers had understood that the offer of this ratio was meant to re-establish the security of White jobs which had been lost when the Status Quo Agreement had been threatened. Then from late January the Chamber started ejecting unmarried strikers from living quarters on mine property, although the rooms were

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1* Sunday Times 12.2.1922
2* The S.A.I.F. spurned "scab" assistance (The Star 1.2.1922)
3* "The Chamber was influenced not by any belief that the concession was required in equity, but solely by the urgent representations of the Prime Minister (The Star 9.2.1922)
4* Joint Executives' meeting (R.D.Mail 10.2.1922)
5* Rand Daily Mail 13.2.1922
6* Hendrikz and Brown (The Star 30.1.1922)
7* The Friend 3.2.1922
8* The Cape Times 6.2.1922. De Volksblad 5.2.1922
9* issue of 31.1.1922
10* Madeley in Assembly 22.2.1922 Hansard

not all needed to house scabs.[1] In late February married men and their families were ejected from mine houses, or else they got court eviction notices. These men did not wish to desert the strikers' cause, yet they could not see their homes uprooted and their families without a roof. Widespread discontent was the result.[2]

The steady disintegration of the strike movement, and the loosening grip of the Augmented Executive on the workers, revealed by the executive's greater readiness to compromise, caused the Chamber to sense victory and harden its heart still further.[3] Late in February the Chamber steadily refused any alteration in its published terms when the S.A.I.F. accepted an offer from the Prime Minister to arbitrate in the struggle.[4] A few days later, when the trade unionist special sub committee set up for the purpose of finding a basis of settlement with the Chamber, proposed considerably to moderate the earlier demands of the strikers,[5] if the Chamber would consent to negotiate, the Chamber of Mines refused the offer out of hand.[6] Again, early in March, further approaches from the strikers' side caused the Chamber to state categorically: "The industry cannot re-open on any terms less favourable to it than those already enunciated." It was not that the members of the Chamber of Mines had a diabolical plan to refuse all concessions, so that the strikers would be forced into unlawful violence. The more moderate members, like the more moderate workers, wanted a settlement, but a settlement without humiliation.[7] But these moderates did not count much in decisions as the situation worked up to a climax, and it was the extremists on both sides who got control in the closing weeks of the strike. The Chamber

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1* For example at Robinson Deep (Story in The Star 1.2.1922)
2* Brakpan meeting resolved against "throwing women and children in the veld." (R.D.Mail 7.3.1922)
3* The Cape Argus 31.1.1922 remarked on this.
4* Arbitration had become necessary because the Chamber refused to guarantee that a settlement between it and the S.A.I.F. would last longer than existing conditions. (H.O.Buckle R.D. Mail 28.1.1922) Smuts' offer came on 15.2.1922
5* The Star 22.2.1922
6* The Star 25.2.1922
7* Political correspondent from House of Assembly (R.D.Mail 25.2.1922)

of Mines' hotheads wished, by insults and a refusal to negotiate with the trade unionists, to discredit the Augmented Executive so that the organisation of the workers would fall to pieces without force from the government, or concessions by the Chamber, being necessary. The Chamber's hotheads wanted this rather than that the workers should be infuriated, by insults and refusals to budge, to a point where they would break out, forcing the military to crush them. This turned out to be the result, however. The Chamber did not take into account a core of workers who would not tamely surrender. It seemed that the divided, discredited and derided Augmented Executive's inevitable fall would cause mass scabbing, and the police could easily deal with the few diehards. The Chamber wanted a full victory to end the intermidable negotiations and conferences of the post war years, yet the desire for such an illicit triumph had to be hidden from the public eye, and when the trade unionists came caps in hand to ask for any settlement short of complete surrender, the Chamber rather grotesquely refused on the grounds that the commercial community would be adversely affected by a "patched-up compromise."[1] In other words, unconditional surrender was demanded of the strikers.

The moderates in the Augmented Executive could not capitulate completely in negotiations, otherwise the mass of strikers would have repudiated them and their terms. Therefore the Chamber had to make some concession if the trade unionists were to be able to continue to speak for the strikers. Thompson told a Germiston meeting that the trade union leaders recognised that it was necessary for further sacrifices to be made on both sides for the reopening of the industry, but they refused to pay the whole price ...The Augmented Executive, beaten to its knees by internal squabbles and an inability to exhaust the

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[1] Rand Daily Mail 3.3.1922
[1] The Star 3.3.1922

Chamber, was prepared, by 3.3.1922, to hear any suggestion from the Chamber at a conference to be held immediately.[1] In reply, the Chamber sent the letter which finally smashed the S.A.I.F. by humiliating it before the workers. The Chamber had succeeded in crushing its old opponent, but this action gave the socialist extremists and commando leaders their chance to take over, to some degree, the leadership of the strikers. "The Chamber had (by its letter) bolted and barred the door to any settlement except by surrender or resistance."[2]

The intransigence of the Chamber was widely and strongly criticised. It was accused of putting "exaggerated profits at the expense of the real welfare of the nation."[3] The newspapers appealed to the S.A.I.F. to put its case before Parliament who knew, for it was plain to see, that the Chamber of Mines was driving the men to desperate methods.[4] This advice came too late. for the S.A.I.F. could no longer control the strikers. It had lost power to the extremists, and once the extremists took over there could be no solution by compromise even arbitration. Once forceable subjection was then feasable, and it was applied from March 10 to 14.

Important as unreasonableness was as a factor in preventing a settlement all during the strike, it must be pointed out that both sides had reasons for refusing the concessions which alone would have made a settlement possible. Each side wanted victory. Each yearned for an end to the eternal wranglings. Both wanted to be fully compensated for the losses and sufferings of the strike - a win without the gloss scraped off by compromise. During the strike first the Chamber and then the S.A.I.F. offered a compromise solution to the deadlock, But in each case negotiations fell through because first the S.A.I.F.

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1. the executive was even prepared to hold a ballot to see if the men wanted to surrender unconditionally (The Star 3.2.1922)
2. "Comrade Bill" page 262
3. De Volksblad 6.3.1922
4. The Friend 4.3.1922, The Sunday Times 5.3.1922, De Volksblad 6.3.1922.

and then the Chamber of Mines decided to hold out for unconditional surrender.

In this refusal of either the Chamber or the S.A.I.F. to compromise - until some very strong pressure was exerted on them - there was very strongly the desire of mastery, of socialism over capitalism,[1*] of trade unionism over mine ownership, of employers over workers, of masters over servants.[3*] Whatever it is called, it was the permanent fight between the haves and the have nots,[4*] the perpetual struggle for mastery. There were many echoes of this from strike platforms. Trade union leader,[5*] Labourite, extremist striker, Bolshevik mine worker or politician,[6*] each indicated that to his mind the strike was a matter of mastery, a struggle for supremacy. The Cape Times held that nothing else really mattered in the strike. "As we have insisted again and again, the (real question in despute) is the question whether employer or employee shall regulate working conditions on the gold mines."[7*] Strike leader Matthews had much the same idea - that the economic crisis on the low grade mines was not a root cause of the dispute. "Had the owners of the mines considered the country in closing down mines in the past?"[8*] he asked pertinantly.

It is difficult to completely understand why the coal and gold miners went on strike at all unless the concept of the workers wanting to win a showdown is introduced. The coal miners disagreed with the threatened cut of their wages, the gold mine workers opposed the removal of the Status Quo Agreement. But even the anger and hotheadedness of the moment should not alone have caused them to rush off immediately into declaring a strike. If fury and panic were the only answers, surely

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1* The workers' chief concern was to put the capitalists "in their place, said Merriman. House of Assembly 22.2.22 Hansard
3* The master-servant attitude ruined the Curlewis Conference, said Nixon M.L.A. (Rand Daily Mail 25.1.1922)
4* Smuts didn't recognise any such principle (The Star 28.1.22)
5* Gartrell said that the workers intended to show the Chamber who was the stronger body. (The Star 24.1.1922)
6* The strike was a struggle for supremacy between the people and the Chamber, said W.H.Andrews (Cape Times 2.2.1922) Thompson contended that every step of the Chamber had been to crush the White worker (R.D.Mail 30.1.1922)
7* Cape Times 30.1.1922 8* The Star 25.2.1922

some trade unionists would have pointed out that there was industrial legislation which had been created specifically for such emergencies. Both the coal miners and the gold miners could have appealed to the Mines Department for a Government Board of Arbitration under the Industrial Disputes Act, which provided that any change in working conditions involving more than ten men could be made grounds for the appointment of a Conciliation Board. There was considerable agitation for government arbitration among the workers after the strike was declared, but if this agitation was genuine, and the workers did want a settlement and not a victory, why had not the agitation for government arbitration come before the strike, when there was a perfectly good opportunity to demand and get it. There was no question of the trade unionists being unfamiliar with their rights, for several Boards had been held under the Act. There was no question of the trade unions being rushed into personal action because the adverse new conditions of work were to come into operation immediately. The colliery employees had three months notice before their wages were to be reduced, the gold mine workers had one month's notice of the nullification of the Status Quo Agreement. In any case, it was the law that immediately the Board of Arbitration was called for, the matter in dispute had to be held up pending enquiry. This made nonsense of the S.A.I.F.'s statement that the declaration of the strike vindicated "the right of the worker to be fully consulted ... without a perpetual threat of conditions being forced on him willy-nilly."[1*]

The Chamber of Mines could equally have applied to the government first over the dispute, as the Minister of Mines remarked,[2*] before it sent the "ultimatum", if it had been inter-

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1* The Star 9.1.1922

2* Malan to House of Assembly 24.2.1922 Hansard

ested purely in solving the economic crisis. But the Chamber wanted a victory because it wanted to get a permanent settlement. "To get down to basic conditions on which the industry can work for a long time without interference," as a mining leader put it.[1*] That meant preventing trade unionism from interfering, as it had been doing continuously since the war, with the smooth working of the mines. That might mean the destruction of the central trade union body, the S.A.I.F. The crushing of the strike by Martial Law was too obvious a solution to breaking up the centralised trade union organisation to be overlooked, at least by the labour side, and any calls for Martial Law from "the other side" were immediately taken as having this aim in view.[2*] Even when violence had got quite out of hand, the trade union and Labour leaders still fought the introduction of Martial Law for that reason.

The strikers were further convinced that the Chamber wanted total victory by the insulting letter of the Chamber sent on 4.3.1922 in which the Chamber refused to recognise the S.A.I.F. in the future. The S.A.I.F. Augmented Executive replied: "On the actual suggested terms of returning to work ... the attitude of the Chamber is one of beating the trade unions and the workers to their knees."[3*] And indeed the terms of the Chamber contained in the letter gave the Augmented Executive every reason to believe that the Chamber was determined not only to get the mines working profitably again, but to so punish trade unionism that it would not give trouble in the future. "Not only does the Chamber repudiate ... collective bargaining but it also new would appear to desire to dictate who shall be members of unions, which union workers shall belong to, whether unions shall federate or not, and in addition crowns it with a

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1* The Star 1.3.1922
2* Col. Creswell to Brakpan meeting (R.D.Mail 4.3.1922)
3* Sunday Times 5.3.1922

demand that the control and representatives of a federation shall be subject to the approval of the Chamber of Mines."[1] Force, even useless ofrce, was more acceptable to men than passive acceptance of such conditions of abjection. The Augmented Executive publically announced: "This is truely a position that orgenised Labour is not likely toee accept without a strenuous struggle in comparison with which the present strike will appear a detail."[2] A remarkable forecast. Six days later the workers' commandos went into action and for a few days wrestled control of the Rand from the police.

On the day before this revolt, the current Parliamentary opinion at Cape Town was that "the one side appears as keen for a fight as the other."[3] Bitter despair was facing arrogant confidence, and both forgot "any other consideration than that of inflicting the maximum damage upon each other."[4]

The Chamber of Mines wanted to crush the S.A.I.F. in the strike because federated trade unionism had developed along lines different from those envisaged by the Chamber when it gave official recognition to workers' organisations in 1916. The Chamber had supported the S.A.I.F. in the hope that this was the best way of meeting the workers' grievances. But the S.A.I.F. had refused to be merely a liason between the Chamber and the mine workers for getting the best results out of a reasonably contented staff. The S.A.I.F. put the benefits of the workers first and the welfare of the mines second, even going so far as to threaten the smooth running of the mines on occasions.[5] For at least 15 months before the 1922 strike broke out,[6] the discipline of the workers had deteriorated. Mine managers had complained of the difficulty of getting the

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1* Sunday Times 5.3.1922
2* ibid
3* Political correspondent of the Rand Daily Mail in issue 9.3.22.
4* The Star editorial 9.3.1922
5* A favour device had been to start a section strike and threaten that it would spread if demands were not met (Association of Mine Managers meeting R.D.Mail 25.2.1922)
6* Minister of Mines Malan to Nationalist delegation (R.D.Mail 9.2.1922)

best out of their workers when they were being baited and thwarted by upstart trade union officials.[1*] Some such officials were power-crazed, others were extreme socialists who planned to ruin capitalism by seeing that "industry should be so harassed and interfered with as to render it unpayable."[2*] The Chamber of Mines stormed: "By a policy of irritating interference, sectional strikes, and flouting of managerial authority (the extremists) have deliberately attempted to cripple the country's chief industry. Can it be wondered at that the gold mines are determined to be, like other industries, master in their own house and no longer at the mercy of irresponsible demogogues."[3*] Shaft stewards were accused of issuing instructions to men as to how they should work. "They hold up shafts at their own sweet will, irrespective of all agreements to the contrary," said the Chamber of Mines Report. It continued revealingly: "the industry is determined to be rid of this intolerable incubus and ... manage its own affairs in the most efficient manner ... I do not think anyone, even the men themselves, can quarrel with the industry in refusing to be any longer tyranised over by petty trade union officials." This did not "in any way indicate a desire to crush trade unionism. The 48-hour week and the basic rates of pay agreed to between the Chamber and the Unions continue in force, as does also the proceedure in regard to Boards of Reference and Conciliation."[4*] But the point is clear that the Chamber wished to crush federated trade unionism and deal with individual weak unions separately. Sir Lionel Phillips had declared on 8.6.1921 that the "trade union movement has grown beyond recognition and is becoming a national danger. To counteract this, discipline must be recovered and a reform of

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1* Chamber of Mines representative (R.D.Mail 31.1.1922)
2* ibid
3* Chamber of Mines 32nd. Annual Report page 135-6
4* Chamber of Mines representative (R.D.Mail 31.1.1922)

the trade unions must be carried out."[1]

The Johannesburg Town Council was also tired of trade unionism. "Trade unionism has ... degenerated into syndicalism ... into unwholesome extremes, and under this form must be told "you must not exist'", said Councillor Harris during the strike.[2] Major Allen, another councillor, said the council was fighting the prostitution of trade unionism. Major King, of the Town Council, said that no one wanted to smash trade unionionism - only stop the misuse of it! Councillor Brooks said he thought trade unionism was sadly abused.[3]

The refusal in March of the Chamber of Mines to recognise the S.A.I.F. as a body representing the miners had its roots in the refusal of the S.A.I.F. to accept that the economic position of the low grade mines was precarious. Throughout the strike negotiations betwsen the Chamber and the S.A.I.F. were nonplussed by the strike leaders' refusal to accept that changes were necessary among the workers.[4] However the S.A.I.F. might have been more amenable to changes if the Chamber had not grouped necessary changes with unnecessary changes in the "ultimatum", thus forcing the S.A.I.F. to accept all or reject all.

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1. "Comrade Bill" page 251
2. Johannesburg Town Council meeting (R.D.Mail 7.3.1922)
3. ibid
4. this has been discussed above

EXTREMISM AND THE COMMANDOS

Chapter VI

Many of the armed men who fought the government forces after 9.5.1922, and who assaulted 'scabs' and killed Natives, were hooligans. But many others who defied the state were, in normal times, peaceable citizens. They had been worked up to a degree where violence became acceptable to them. This aspect of the strike - the conditioning of the mass of the strikers so that thousands of them risked their lives for matters which, in normal times, they might not have bothered to vote for - will now be considered.

The strikers were agitated to boiling point by a great variety of nerve shattering pressures acting on them, ranging from Chamber of Mines propaganda to break the strike, to jitters caused by scabs returning to work. A barrage of bad news, threats, challenges, demagogy and betrayals drenched the strikers who became more susceptable to suggestions of violence as it became obvious that constitutional strike methods were leading straight to utter defeat. Some of the profusion of intimidations - those originating from the employers' side - deliberately poured on the strikers were meant to terrify them into submission. Other forces - inspired by the extremists - were meant to stampede the strikers into extremism. Depending on the nature of the individual striker, he was either intimidated into returning to work, or else he broke loose in armed rebellion, at least for some hours.

The strike came into being "Extraordinarily quietly. There was little demonstration. There was no jubilation...the knots of men discussed...in sober and subdued spirit."[1] But tension grew so rapidly that soon a spontaneous outburst became most likely.[2] The long duration of the strike - eventually two months - was particularily nerve wearing. The mine workers were vir-

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1. Rand Daily Mail report 11.1.1922
2. The Friend predicted trouble on a large scale as early as 21.1.1922.

tually without resources. "Patience is only possible for people with bank balances," wrote Kentridge.[1] There was in fact little danger of starvation, and many strikers ate better through farmers' generousity than they had ever done before.[2] But a miner could not reconcile himself to charity, or believe in its continuance to feed his family.

More harassing than the immediate provision of food was the fear of the future. Strike leaders stressed that this was no ordinary industrial dispute for wages, but a life-and-death struggle to protect themselves and their children,[3] a fight to retain what Labour over a hundred years had worked to attain in status and working conditions,[4] and even a fight that would make or marr South Africa.[5] And there was danger that the mines would be flooded. The newspapers vividly painted the rapid deterioration of the unused mines, and the likelihood that many would never be in use again - meaning that all their workers would be unemployed. Even if mines did not close, every week's flooding would require six weeks' dewatering, it was said.[6] During the strike apprehension was caused by the closing down at the end of January of the Lupaardsvlei Mine, and of the Robinson Deep in early March. More serious was the position of the E.R.P.M. and the Knights Central on the East Rand. "Unless these mines are restarted this week," said a Chamber of Mines spokesman in January, "they will be closed down for ever."[7] Their closure would mean that the Witwatersrand Deep, the Witwatersrand Mine and several other mines would also go out of production, threatening the employment of at least 4,000 White men.[8]

As the strike dragged on through so many weeks, tempers grew strained. A dangerous spirit of defiance soon appeared,

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1* letter in Rand Daily Mail 24.1.1922
2* Others were not so fortunate. The Rand Aid Association was swamped with appeals, while the Strikers' Central Distress Fund reported that its work was "increasing at a tremendous rate daily" (The Star 1.2.1922)
3* G. Gwynne in Brakpan Market Square (R.D.Mail 12.1.1922)
4* McMullineux M.L.A. at Krugersdorp (R.D.Mail 18.1.1922)
5* Madeley M.L.A. at Workers' Hall, Boksburg (The Star 18.1.22)
6* R.D.Mail report 18.1.1922)
7* The Star 26.1.1922
8* Sir Harry Ross Skinner (The Star 2.2.1922)

which expressed itself, among other places, in the gallery of the Johannesburg Town Council Chamber. There speaker after speaker, including the mayor himself[1*], were howled down whenever they expressed an opinion on the strike which was unpopular with the gallery[2*]. On one occasion at least, the mayor had to leave his Chair and the Chamber before order was restored[3*].

Ironically, it was the Chamber of Mines which substantially contributed to the atmosphere of strain and stress which made the revolt possible. The Chamber and the other employers involved in the strike refused to guarantee that there would be no victimisation of prominent strikers if and when the strike should be called off. It was common knowledge that jobs would be short, so, as the better known and more militant strikers knew that they were certain to be out of employment, possibly for years, they had no reason for seeking conciliation or peace. The S.A.I.F. chief Thompson asked again and again for a guarantee that there would be no victimisation[4*], but the Chamber ignored his warnings of danger[5*], and the V.F.P. Company chairman, Bernard Price, stated specifically that he would take back only such men as he desired[6*]. The Chamber of Mines' Colliery Section indicated that it was re-signing labour on a discriminatory basis[7*]. Some of the employers contributed to the insecurity felt about employment by sacking workers whom the strike had made redundant. The Modderfontein Dynamite Factory laid off 200 employees[8*]. The employees of the Johannesburg motor engineering shops were all dismissed[9*], the steel workers at Vereeniging received notice of discharge on January 31[10*], the employees of the V.F.P. generating station at Vereeniging were dismissed on the next day[11*], when the axe also fell on the miners of the Cornelia Colliery in the Free State. Much later in the[12*]

1* Rand Daily Mail 1.2.1922
2* H. Wyndham howled down (The Star 26.1.1922)
3* Sunday Times 5.3.1922
4* last day of Curlewis Conference (R.D.Mail 28.1.1922)
5* ibid
6* The Star 26.1.1922
7* ibid 2.2.1922
8* R.D.Mail 13.2.1922
9* R.D.Mail 13.2.1922
10* ibid 1.2.1922
11* ibid 2.2.1922
12* R.D.Mail 2.2.1922

strike the gold mining workers were sacked in toto, and told that they were no longer on strike, but had "actually become unemployed."[1*]

But it was news from the Witbank coal fields which made the strikers most uneasy about the chances of re-employment. Notices were issued on the coal fields on 15.2.1922 stating that considerably less than half of the 700 coal miners who struck could be re-employed in the forseeable future. There was immediate employment for only 100 men. During the strike work had been re-arranged and nearly adequate supplies of coal had been mined without the assistance of the majority of the White mine workers.[2*] General Smuts rather callously asserted that the coal miners were no longer on strike, but unemployed.[3*] "When you make a mistake like that (of going on strike) you pay for it," he told the coal miners.[4*]

The attempts of the Chamber of Mines propagandists to break the strike by undermining the unity of the strikers and the strikers' loyalty to their trade union leaders certainly did contribute towards the strike's termination, but not perhaps in the way intended. The Chamber tried to terrify the strikers into scabbing; its spokesmen said that only a limited number of jobs would be available, and that workers who scabbed would have a much better chance, not only of getting re-employment, but of getting the best jobs available. Loyalty to the strike movement would take the bread and butter out of their childrens' mouths, and "if the White workers resolve to continue to abstain from work, the (black-white) ratio will go automatically."[5*] The lesson that it was wiser to scab now was driven home repeatedly. Sir Evelyn Wallers announced that, as a result of the strike, retrenchment additional to that required

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1* Chamber of Mines statement in The Star 7.3.1922
2* The Chamber of Mines Annual Report (33rd), page 54: "Notwithstanding the strike a satisfactory output was maintained by the colliery officials and the natives ... assisted by those men who drifted back to work."
3* House of Assembly 24.2.1922
4* ibid Hansard.
5* Rand Daily Mail 18.2.1922

by the critical position of the industry, was "unfortunately unavoidable."[1] The V.F.P. Company chairman cautioned that "owing to the restriction in the scale of operations caused by the strike it will be impossible ... to re-employ all the men who are now on strike."[2] Mr. Buckle stated, moreover, that wages as well as the number to be re-employed would be cut by the Chamber of Mines.[3] The Chamber of Mines 32nd Annual Report, issued in February in the middle of the strike, announced: "The Chamber is no longer in a position to reopen the mines upon the acceptance of its original proposals (that caused the S.A.I.F. to declare a strike). This proposal was (first) put forward in November when gold was 104s. per oz. The further drop of 9s. per oz. since would of itself compel further economies, additional to those then proposed, and the enormous expense caused by the strike has aggrevated the position."[4] There was no point in the strikers compromising when concessions were outdated literally before they were made.

A leaflet campaign, aimed at confusing the strikers and sowing distrust in strike leaders,[5] continued non-stop during the strike. These pamphlets were unsigned, and showede on occasions a degree of ingenuity. One such was a pamphlet called "An Appeal to Farmers", supposed to be issued by the "National White Labour Party of South Africa."[6] It appealed to farmers to employ only White labour at uneconomical wages, and thereby hoped to place the farmers in a dilemma - they could hardly demand that the Chamber of Mines should employ Whites at uneconomical wages when they refused to employ anything but Blacks on their farms. Another circular called the Augmented Executive "just a Power House clique."[7]

This variety of Chamber of Mines tactics to end the strike was considered underhand, the "most dispicable and cowardly tactics imaginable."[8] The resentment of these tactics partly

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1. Curlewis Conference The Star 26.1.1922
2. ibid
3. Rand Daily Mail 28.1.1922
4. Chamber of Mines 32nd. Annual Report page 136
5. thus said strike leader P.J. Bradley (The Star 27.1.1922
6. Which [illegible] the S.A.I.F. existed only in the imagination of the Chamber of Mines
7. Referred to in Rand Daily Mail 2.2.1922
8. P.J. Brady The Star 27.1.1922

explains why not only hooligans, or political anarchists, or natural extremists, joined in the violence towards the end of the strike, but also the behaviour of peacable men, respected in their communitiesw, who also shot at the police. Many hundreds of decent men turned to violence in the strike's dying days, and made the "revolt" on the Rand possible. They did so for a variety of reasons, fear, anger, frustration being among them, and the recklessness which characterised their thinking can be seen in a gross of speeches. One such was made by the mayor of Springs, Jack Cowan, a respected citizen and well-known trade unionist who had had a distinguished war record, in the Johannesburg Town Hall on 5.2.1922. "Rather than go down in the struggle," he said "we are prepared as a last weapon to have a revolution ... There have been two wars in my lifetime, and I have fought in both ... If it comes to fighting, and God forbid that it should, I am going to do a bit of fighting for myself this time. I have done enough for the other side. I have always recognised and supported governments, but when governments want to down you and your children, and when Smuts, Prime Minister, is backing the Chamber of Mines to p[illegible]nite standard of South Africa in the background and [illegible]ick standard in the foreground, it is time for every man to put his thinking cap on ... If we have to fight ... some of us will go down, but what is the difference? ...in a year or two, half the people in this hall will be down with phthisis. What is the difference between having to go down a hole to die or having to die fighting for a chance for your kiddies?"[1*] This speech indicates the fears of the average striker - unemployment, the government's attitude, and phthisis. They over-dramatised their plight, for they were still among the best payed workmen in the world, and, except for a few thousand, in no immediate danger of losing their jobs. But their agitation was genuine. Wateraton asserted to "Koos' Par-

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1* Sunday Times 5.2.1922

liament" that 90 per cent of the workers would take any step rather than go down in the fight.[1*] Blood would flow on the Rand, he said, but he was not taken seriously.[2*] The employers continued to act in a manner which agitated the strikers. No single thing aroused the strikers more than the attempts of the Chamber, through using officials, scabs and Natives, to run the gold mines without the strikers. This was a chilling threat to the White miners' very existance.

The refusal of the White mine officials to take the side of the strikers was much deplored, but when the mine officials saved the Chamber of Mines from having to come to terms immediately by taking over the running of the essential services that the strikers had purposely deserted, the strikers were furious. The Benoni Strike Committee demanded of the officials "Do you view yourselves as White men and comrades? ... if you carry out your ... resolution we shall regard your action as fratricide, and surely Nemesis is watching."[3*] The workers who packed the Johannesburg Town Hall each lunch hour, resolved that "the action of all ... now working on the so-called essential services ... constitutes ... deliberate scabbing ... assisting ... the Chamber of Mines, reducing the status of White civilization, and blasting the hopes and prospects of the rising generation."[4*] Worse followed after the Prime Minister requested the mining industry to re-open the mines, and the officials consented to prepare the mines to receive scabs, and do everything in their power to get the mines restarted.[5*] This was a reversion of their former declared neutrality, but they agreed to it because they feared that their own well paid jobs would be ruined by the destruction of the mines.[6*] We have waited long enough," said a speaker at an Underground Officials' meet-

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1* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
2* Ibid
3* The Star 17.1.1922
4* Rand Daily Mail 25.1.1922
5* The Star 14.2.1922
6* On 5.1.1922 the executive of the Underground Officials Association had instructed all underground officials not to assist in any productive work. (The Star 6.1.1922)

ing, "and although we have maintained a neutral attitude so far, we realise that we have to take prompt action to prevent general disaster."[1] A few days later "the officials ... assisted by a few returned strikers, are making strenuous efforts not only to clean up and get things restarted on the usual scale, but to assist in getting more to the mills, and are performing wonders."[2] Chamber of Mines officials were elated. "The end of the strike is definately in sight," said a prominant mining man.[3] "The gold mines ... are going to run. Possibly the amount of the mining done in them is extremely small. But as time goes on it will increase,"[4] said another. There was no immediate danger of most of the strikers suddenly becoming obsolete, as was happening on the coal mines. The refusal of the miners to scab in large numbers confounded both Smuts' plan and the Chamber of Mines' optimism. But the mass of the strikers did not know this, and the emotion of hate, of fear and of insecurity rose tremendously when they saw the mines running again. Officials became a detested race. Some were chased in the streets,[5] or assaulted,[6] or threatened.[7] "Intimidation of officials is being carried out on a wide scale, and numerous anonymous letters have been circulating, threatening various pains and penalties.."[8] Soon the houses and furniture of officials were being burnt while the officials were away underground.[9]

The strikers' nerves were tried to breaking point not only by the officials, but by returning scabs, and even more so by rumours of mass betrayals of the "closed shop" principle. From the last days of January, scabs began returning to the mines, especially the coal mines, but the situation really got serious in later February. After the Prime Minister had advised

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1* The Star 15.2.1922
2* The Star 16.2.1922
3* The Star 16.2.1922
4* ibid
5* In Benoni. R.D.Mail 22.2.1922
6* At Randfontein Estates (The Star 24.2.22) Robinson Deep (R.D.Mail 17.3.1922)
7* The International 23.2.1922
8* Report in R.D.Mail 27.2.1922
9* New Modder mine captain, e.g. (R.D.Mail 1.3.1922). During the revolt many officials' houses were burnt down.

the strikers to return to the mines after 13.2.1922, the Chamber of Mines spokesmen reported 4,500 White men working on the gold mines on 16.2.1922. "Twice as many men reported for duty at the mines today as were offering the previous day", said a mining official.[1] "The mines will be working next week from one end of the Reef to the other," asserted a mining man.[2] "With the steady increase of miners the position is daily improving and will admit to further stamps being dropped soon," said a Chamber member a day later.[3] It later transpired that comparatively few miners had returned, but these Press reports paniced the men into violent attacks on scabs. They were kidnapped, beaten up by mobs,[4] their houses and furniture were burnt.[5] Molestation of scabs became serious even in peaceful Springs, and in previously undisturbed Krugersdorp.[5] The official strike leadership could not countenance this violence, yet, with picketting prohibited, it knew of no other method of stopping this stab in the back to the strike, which could prove fatal. The strikers could not be asked to retain their peace while the Chamber was importing scabs from other parts of the country, notably Kimberley, to work the mines.[7] It could not be expected that they were going to stand aside and allow the Chamber to import scabs, warned Joe Thompson.[8]

Widespread violence had the effect of stopping intending scabs from carrying out their plans. The police could not give adequate protection, and many found it safer to remain on strike. "Terrorism has undoubtedly checked the resumption of work on the mines," commented the Rand Daily Mail.[9]

Police were rushed into the Rand from all over South Africa

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1. Rand Daily Mail 17.2.1922
2. ibid 18.2.1922
3. Sunday Times 19.2.1922
4. Numerous cases are related in Rand Daily Mail 18.2.1922, 20.2.1922 etc.
5. a full list of assaults, housebrnings and other violence before the 'Revolt' is given in Rand Daily Mail 3.3.1922.
6. Rand Daily Mail 23.2.1922
7. These imported scabs were mostly skilled workers like engine drivers (R.D.Mail 16.2.1922)
8. Rand Daily Mail 22.2.1922
9. ibid 25.2.1922.

Africa to back Smuts' promise that those who returned to work would be protected.[1] By the end of February scabs took heart again. "Sufficient protection at last!" said a Chamber of Mines Press advertisement, while a leading mine official reported: "The position with regard to the return to work movement is considerably better."[2] But cases of violence to workers and strike breakers continued on an increased scale. The thousands of police were helpless to stop the mob beatings up, and the more secretive thrashings in the veld at night. Mobs set upon scabs who had armed police escorts, and when the scabs were moved by the Chamber to mine quarters under heavy police guard, the strikers burnt the houses they had left behind, and made bonfires of their furniture in the streets. In a few cases they even assaulted the families of scabs. But scabbing continued at a rapid rate, because so many miners had lost faith in the strike. Organised trade unionism was obviously disintegrating and being replaced by extremism. The average family man could not help but be influenced by the knowledge that the strike was doomed, and that if he wanted sure employment, he had to go back to work before the strike ended, since the numbers of jobs available had strunk by many thousands.[3] On 1.3.1922 the Chamber reported that nearly 900 men had returned in a stampede.[4] From that time the mobs really got out of hand. The police could do no more than prevent badly mauled scabs from being killed. Scabs were fired on by snipers, besides the usual houseburnings and beatings up.

Nevertheless in some cases, fear of unemployment continued to prove greater than fear of assault, especially in outlying areas like the Far East Rand the the West Rand, where the diehards were few and could not easily be supported from the extremist packed areas of Johannesburg and the near East Rand. At both Witbank and Vereeniging, the strike collapsed because of

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1* About 1,300 police were brought in after Smuts' promise, according to the Martial Law Commission Report para 20.
2* The Star 28.2.1922
3* ibid
4* Rand Daily Mail 2.3.1922

scabbing. All during February the strike movement on the coal fields had been crumbling. The Witbank Strike Committee tried to stop scabbing, telling the local magistrate that it could not answer for the consequences unless the scabs "recanted", as feeling was intense.[1] The scabs, haunted by the common knowledge that the coal mines could be run with half the staff,[2] refused to be intimidated, and others rapidly joined them,[3] eager to return first because the adverse trade developments meant that all could not be re-employed.[4] As the coal mines had never stopped operations, as had the gold mines, the temptation to weaker men to return was correspondingly stronger.[5] The colliery workers were terrified by stories of the coal export trade to India via Lourenco Marques being lost by the slowing down of output.[6] A deputation of coal miners went to Johannesburg to plead that the coal miners should be released from their commitment to see the strike out.[7] In early March the various pressures eventually broke the coal miners, and they were streaming back to work. The collieries reported having more recruits than they required.[8] In Vereeniging, another outlying strike area, the pressure also told on the strikers. When they were wavering, the government offered a £200,000 contract to the Vereeniging African Steel Corporation, and the steel workers had the choice of seeing the contract lost by remaining on strike (there was a time limit for acceptance) or having employment guaranteed by going back.[9] They went back.

This and other governmental acts made the strikers believe that the Cabinet and Police had joined the Chamber of Mines and the Johannesburg Town Council in one big scheme to down them. After all, the ordinary strikers had to believe what they saw - the Police guarding the mines, the power stations,[10] attending strike meetings although the strikers frequently pro-

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1* The Star 1.2.1922
2* The Cape Times 26.1.1922
3* Rand Daily Mail 31.1.1922
4* ibid
5* ibid 1.2.1922
6* ibid 18.1.1922
7* The Star 8.2.1922
8* ibid 4.3.1922
9* R.D.Mail 4.3.1922
10* New Kleinfontein and the Johannesburg municipal.

tested, arresting pickets, and, it was rumoured, bribing certain strikers to scab. In addition, as has been discussed above, Smuts was working to defeat the strike, and Martial Law, it was said, would soon cripple the strike organisation and therefore defeat the strike.*1

The combination of many factors led to mounting pressure all through February.*2 Late in the month Mr. Merriman told Parliament that "we are on the edge of a volcano."*3 Smuts commented "There is no doubt that within the last few days the situation on the Rand has become more dangerous. There is a greater spirit of lawlessness; there is greater interference by strikers."*4 Bloodshed was responsibly considered as the inevitable result unless the Chamber of Mines made concessions.*5 The men would not accept abject surrender, said Boydell.*a5 Passions were at boiling point even in far off Parliament,*6 and isolated Krugersdorp was reported to be "at fever pitch". How close the flame was to the powder keg in Johannesburg can be seen from the refusal of the technical and clerical staff of the Johannesburg Power Station to continue working because the police could not, they believed, protect their homes and families.*7

The last straw was the failure of the general strike. It was the final hope of those who wanted victory without force that the general strike should succeed. When it was announced to the Johannesburg Town Hall meeting, "there was frantic enthusiasm. The crowd cheered madly and raised their hats in the air."*8 But as soon as it was clear that the workers of South Africa were not going to respond, the situation on the Rand worsened drastically. On the day when the failure of the general strike was obvious, the centre of Jonannesburg was in a

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1* M. Dunne at Fordsburg meeting (R.D.Mail 28.2.1922)
2* nothing, though, had anything like an equal effect to Smuts' efforts to have the mines re-opened.
3* House ofAssembly 24.2.1922 Hansard
4* House of Assembly 23.2.1922 Hansard
5* ibid
a5* House Of Assembly 1.3.1922 Hansard
6* The Parliamentary debate on the shootings of three strikers at Boksburg on 28.2.1922 "surpassed in bitterness any that took place during the World War" (R.D.Mail 4.3.1922)
7* The Star 28.2.1922
8* R.D.Mail 7.3.1922

tumult, with crowds of strikers in the streets defying detatchments of armed police, and serious bloodshed was narrowly averted.[1] Shops were forced to shut, everything but physical violence being used while police gazed helplessly on. The Star commented: "For some hours of yesterday the people of Johannesburg had the feeling of living in a powder magazine in which a spark might cause an explosion."[2] On the next day, 9.3.1922, the police had to clear large tracts of Joubert Street, Pritchard Street and Risaik Street, and numbers of persons were arrested for being in unlawful possession of dangerous weapons. At 5.15 p.m. the square in front of the Town Hall was filled with up to 20,000 excited persons.[3] About 12 hours later the revolt broke out.

The second part of this chapter is a consideration of how the strikers managed to hold out for over two months, and end the strike still powerfully organised, in spite of the collapse of the S.A.I.F. While trade union organisation was fading, a new type of organisation among the strikers was building up. This organisation was not the product of the strike leaders' plans. It was the huge body of strikers themselves who were responsible for the commandos. The commandos were essentially spontaneous growths from among the men, which were sanctioned when they already existed by the trade union movement's leaders.[4] What were the commandos? They were bodies of strikers, from about 50 to 500 strong, organised on semi-military lines. Much more will be said about them later in this chapter.

The commandos were so important to the labour agitation because they enabled the strikers to defy the government at the end of the strike, if only for a short time. The commando members had been conditioned to accept violence as a final gesture, if not as a solution.

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1. The Star 6.3.1922
2. Rand Daily Mail 9.3.1922
3. ibid 10.3.1922
4. The Augmented Executive authorised the commandos "for peaceful demonstrations only" (C.H.Smith in Rex vs C.H.Smith)

A more important part of the strike organisation earlier on in the strike, before the commandos played a predominant part in the later stages, were the strike committees. These were created by the Augmented Executive in the first weeks of the strike and were intended to help organised trade unionism to achieve peaceful strength. That "success depends upon the maintenance of law and order" was stressed at the appointment of the Springs strike committee, for instance.[1] Later the Augmented Executive instructed the strike committees that there was to be no rowdyism - the committees were not only to avoid coming into contact with the authorities but to co-operate with them in preserving peace and order.[2] Hertzog in early February was convinced that the strikers had "organised themselves against the violence of hotheads."[3] The Augmented Executive decision on 28.1.1922 set the strike committees free to act virtually as they wished, but the committees in the main kept the strike peaceful and organised. They were drawn mainly from the older trade unionists, while the younger men were attracted more by the commandos. So conservative were the strike committees that they were not invited to take part in the plot to rebel. In most cases they knew nothing about the rebellion, except from hearsay, until it occurred.[4]

The organisation of the strike gave the impression to the authorities that violence would be kept in check by the strikers themselves, and this may have caused the state to delay any intervention[5] until the strikers' organisations came to challenge the government's predominance. But the government had already allowed the commandos to grow and organise to such an extent as to virtually become private armies of the strike movement. Either the government did not realise that such com-

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1. The Star 11.1.1922
2. G. Brown R.D.Mail 30.1.1922
3. De Volksblad 9.2.1922
4. (C.W. Lundin's evidence in Rex vs E.W. Gibbs)
5. In January the commandos and the police got on excellently, holding a gymkhana at the Springs Race Course in which the police took part in the mounted events, for instance.

mandoe could challenge the state if they were organised and controlled by extremists, or the government wanted a showdown with the long-agitating Rand White mine workers. The first explanation is the more likely.[1*] There were reasons for the public and the government to be rather indulgent towards the commandos in their formative weeks. It looked like a case of silly miners killing time by playing at soldiers.[2*] Sir Abe Bailey went to see a commando practicing and reported "Most of them looked dejected and ashamed of themselves, more like paid mutes at a funeral."[3*] Public alarm might have been caused by the "big pull" of 6.2.1922,[4*] when the commandos were to have gone over the top (as the slang went) at 8 a.m. to stop scabbing at by any methods - if the pull had succeeded. But Johannesburg was soon relaxed and laughing. The most bellicose of all commandos, the Fordsburg commando "mustered at 6 a.m. But only 200 to 300, half the usual number, turned up. The gaps in the ranks may ... be ascribed to the fact that a lot of the rank end file found 6 a.m. an irksome hour."[5*] The 'big pull' watered down to 50 men marching to City Deep, "pouncing on" three workers, carrying them off on motor cycles to the strike committee's office, from where they were soon rescued by two policemen, and taken back to work.[6*] The public doubtless found it all rather amusing.

But some did realise the potential danger to the state of the strikers' commando system. The "Cape Argue" referred to "The sinister commando movement,"[7*] while the "Friend" spoke in early February of "This army which has been formed on the East Rand ... these regiments of honest and unsuspecting miners, led

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1* As the State Archives for the 1922 Strike are closed, it is not possible to be more definate.
2* In front of the Johannesburg Town Hall a commando stacked their cycles in threes "although there was a perfectly reliable pavement all the way along." (R.D.Mail 7.2.1922)
3* Sunday Times 5.2.1922
4* According to the Martial Law Inquiry, para 103, the order for this 'big pull' came from the Central Strike Committee.
5* R.D.Mail report 7.2.1922
6* ibid
7* The Cape Argus 8.2.1922

by hotheads with Soviet tendencies, and these mounted commandos of racially inflamed Dutch-speaking burgers may yet be used as tools in an attempted coup d'etat." Even if there was no actual plot to overthrow the government, "when angry and excited men sit at playing at regiments and armies there is always an element of danger."[1] And the temptation, truely, to eventually use the 'regiments' of miners to coerce the government was scarcely resistable. Miners' force in 1913 had left the government nearly powerless. Why not again?

In any case, the orderliness of the commandos rested on insecure foundations. There was a tradition of violence in labour disputes on the Rand, and there was a good deal of inflamatory bitterness left over from previous strikes. That trouble would occur unless the strike was rapidly settled was probable, and it was by no means impossible to predict accurately what did happen.

When the strike began, the 22,000 strikers spent the first few days getting used to the idea. They enjoyed the break from long hours of work. But the strikers not being generally of reflective habits, and the Rand being very short of variety in amusement or easily accessable places of natural or manmade beauty, the strikers soon grew restless, and began meeting together during the day to discuss the strike. The greatest war in history had been over for less than four years, and many thousands of the strikers were ex-servicemen and still soldiers at heart. Their inclinations tended towards organisation on military lines. After they had tired of cycling together in groups from town to town, and meeting in open spaces,[2] their thoughts tended towards drill and organisation. What gave them a push in that direction was the failure of the Curlewis Conference. The formation of the strike commandos was the spontaneous answer of the strikers to the failure of negotiating methods at the conference. The strikers were deter-

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1. The Friend 3.2.1922
2. Rand Daily Mail 19.1.1922

ined not to be overriden by the police, as in 1914, because of lack of organised strength, and the formation of the commandos date from the last, decalying days of the Curlewis Conference.[1]

There had been attempts to form strike commandos in previous strikes on the Rand. In the 1914 strike, the General Strike Committee issued a circular to trade unions: "(We) request all your members to organise into commandos for ... greater efficiency in the Federation Forces." General Smuts said that he had information that the men were to organise into small bands of six men and a corporal.[2]

All along the Rand the strikers organised themselves into bands,which got the name of commandos, during the closing weeks of January, 1922. They elected commandants, generals and captains from the natural leaders among them. The strikers who had been N.C.C.s during the war automatically took over the task of drilling the rank and file, of getting them into formation, of forming fours etc.[3] The strikers had a diversion; they felt confidence now when organised in a military fashion, and secure in a formation of fellow strikers, marching down a street. The commandos came into existance for various reasons At Brakpan the commando was formed to give the men moral courage. "It was felt that if large numbers of them met they would not become discouraged." Other reasons given were "to prevent loafing about the streets," "to keep fit so that when the strike was settled they ...(could) carry on their work."[4] In Springs the local commando started as a vigilance force which was also to "stimulate interest and promote discipline."[5]

In no time every town had its commando, well organised, autonomous, but keeping a liason with the local strike committee, The connexion of the commandos with the local strike committees and the Augmented Executive varied from district to

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1 • A.E.Trigger, Divisional Criminal Investigating Officer, Transvaal, in evidence in Rex vs H.H. Sandham.
2 • Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 86
3 • Description of commando Rand Daily Mail 27.1.1922
4 • E.W. Gibbs in Rex vs E.W. Gibbs
5 • J. Allen in Rex vs J. Allen.

district, but generally the commandos refused to be dominated and eventually ordered about the Augmented Executive and the strike committees, as shall be shown.

The leaders and personel of the commandos were mainly Afrikaners, who took readily to a type of strike organisation which they could understand better than the trade unionism of the negotiating table - a British tradition foreign to them.

Commandos grew ever more popular. "Commandos are being formed not only in every district, but in every sub-district, and physical drill and military evolutions form part of the daily proceedings."[1] More omnious types of training grew up, like unmounting horsemen,[2] and operating machine guns, which could not convincingly be explained as ways of keeping the men fit.[3] The commandos, however, had no machine guns, or the prospect of getting any, and strike leaders explained that the men needed variety in their exercises. Next the strikers' wives formed themselves into commandos. An early women's commando was that formed at a meeting in the offices of the Mine Workers Union, Germiston. Mrs. P. Koch, presiding, said that the commando was to act on behalf "of the women and child -ren."[4] Many women joined. On 5.3.1922, 700 women and children were in a Brakpan Market Square rally of commandos.[5] Mrs. Watersston, wife of the Member of Parliament, joined up.[6] In subsequent events, the women sometimes acted with at least as much truculance as did the men.[a5] Their particular talent lay in marching to mines and abusing and punching strike breakers.[a6] The flabergasted police never quite found an answer to this.

The great majority of commandos were peacable, but some from the start wanted to use force. At 5.40 a.m. on 23.1.1922

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1. Rand Daily Mail 1.2.1922
2. The Star 9.2.1922
3. The Fordsburg commando, in particular, thought of many unusual ways of keeping fit. (Rand Daily Mail 27.1.1922)
4. The Star 14.2.1922
5. The Star 6.3.1922
6. Madeley in House of Assembly 6.3.1922 Hansard

a5. The Krugersdorp women's commando requested their menfolk to turn captured scabs over to them (Rex. vs A.P. Dreyer)

a6. Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 29.

the police dispersed a commando of 30 horsemen and 70 cyclists outside the E.R.P.M. Power Station, the commando's intention being apparently to "deal with" the workers inside.[1] Then there was the Putfontein commando affair,[2] and the Kocksoord commando arrests,[3] and fears of irresponsible raiding commandos were expressed even in isolated Witbank.[4] But for a long time violence from the commandos approached the man in the street no closer than his morning newspaper.

As soon as commandos had learnt to march in column, they eagerly showed their smartness to the public, and to other commandos. Soon they were marching through public streets to mass demonstrations,[5] each commando headed by buglers, a mounted section on horses, and then the 'infantry' on column of route. After the infantry came the cycle and motor cycle section, which formed the dispatch riding, scouting, and later, in some cases, the dynamite laying section of the commando.[6]

The trade union officials quickly saw the value of these commandos, especially for pulling out scabs and resisting illegal police tactics.[7] The Augmented Executive endorsed the commando system,[8] and when affirming this endorsement a few days later, instructed the commandos to "carry on the duties of stopping scabbing."[9] The Augmented Executive members were also aware of the necessity of disciplining and controlling the commandos. "You must all be prepared to do what your leaders want ..."[10] Another trade union official suggested that commandos should consist of the members of a trade or occupation which formed a Union, like the Boilermakers Union. Each union should organise itself, under its own officers, into a unit which could be linked up with one big commando of at

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1 • Court case of eight ringleaders reported in Star 9.3.1922
2 • Rand Daily Mail 19.1.1922
3 • A mounted commando was supposed to be planning to capture local police stations 16 miles west of Krugersdorp. The police made a number of arrests on 27.1.22 (The Star 28.1.1922)
4 • R.D.Mail 25.1.1922
5 • At Boksburg (R.D.Mail 10.2.22), Brakpan (R.D.Mail 14.2.22) Germiston (The Star 22.2.22) and Krugersdorp (Star 18.2.22)
6 • R.D.Mail 7.2.22.
7 • Goulder (R.D.Mail 31.1.1922)
8 • R.D.Mail 3.2.22
9 • ibid 9.2.22
10 • Brown (The Star 30.1.1922)

least 1,000 men.[1] This form of commando organisation was obviously more advantageous to trade unionism than was the earlier form of commando organisation. Commandos formed in Unions would fall much more under the control of Union officials than would commandos formed in towns with engine drivers, pumpmen and miners all lumped together. This trade union move failed. In outlying areas like Krugersdorp trade unions did get control of local commandos.[2] But generally the "union commandos"[3] like the Tramways and Power House commando, dated from the declaration of the general strike in March. The really big commandos, like the Fordsburg, Jeppe and Boksburg commandos remained regional and independent of the trade unionists. A later development was that strong armed individuals formed their own commandos of cronies and intimidated strikers, and roamed as free and autocratic as highland chiefs.[4]

From time to time, nevertheless, the trade union leaders tried to use the commandos to stop scabs and officials working.[5] The Bolsheviks also tried to step on to the commando bandwagon. They realised that the commandos could be the force they lacked to really give trouble to the capitalists. So they encouraged the further consolidation of the commando movement.[6] They had influence among some commandos, and the Fordsburg commando marched with the Soviet slogan on its banner "Workers of the World Unite."[7]

Encouraged by these various pressures, the commandos began to take an active interest in the officials and scabs who were keeping the essential services on the mines going, and therefore saving the magnates from having to surrender. Commandos marched on to mine property and urged the officials they met to "come out on strike" otherwise "we will not be

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1. Coronation Park meeting Rand Daily Mail 31.1.1922
2. The Star 2.2.1922
3. Rand Daily Mail 1.3.1922
4. There was Potgieter's commando in Boksburg North, which later became the Potgieter-Venter commando. When the revolt broke out this band marched out to "shoot police" undeterred by their not possessing a gun among the lot of them (Rex vs. F.W. Lippiatt and Others. L.F.Nel's evidence)
5. Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 45
6. Fisher suggested that a general staff of commando leaders should be formed. (RD MAIL 3.3.1922)
7. RAND DAILY MAIL 2.3.1922

be responsible for the consequences."[1] These threats of consequences and the moral effect of marching commandos, was as far as the commando leaders were prepared to go at that stage, and a strong reply from the mine manager, together with the presence of detatchments of police, was always sufficient to have the commando marching away again. Large commandos at this stage was very orderly, revelling in their discipline rather than otherwise, and even polite.[2] However, the ineffectiveness of this type of commando pressure was soon obvious, and the threats made to mine officials became less vague.[3] Soon the threats became reinforced by revolver shots fired into the air.[4] When the Germiston Commando visited the Knights Central Mine, it commandant, W.K.Jelly, told the officials: "The Chamber of Mines is defunct, and we, the workers, have now taken over control. In future you will take your orders from us ... if you range yourselves on the side of the Chamber of Mines you will lose your jobs."[5] It was not long before Mr. Jolly was arrested for incitement to public violence.

Interference by commandos with citizens who happened to be scabs or officials had to receive official attention. On 7.2.1922 Truter, Commissioner of Police for the Transvaal, announced that "The use of bodies of men such as commandos, to pull out officials working on essential services constitutes the crime of public violence, and every person who forms a unit of such body or commando ... is guilty of the crime of public violence."[6] Yet intimidation of strikers continued, and the commandos largely thwarted Smuts' plan for ending the m4 strike by re-opening the mines on 14.2.1922. Opinion in the House of Assembly was that the time was overripe for tackling

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1* Fordsburg Commando at Crown Mines (The Star 1.2.1922)
2* commando outside Turffontein Hotel (The Star 9.2.1922)
3* Sunday Times 12.2.1922. Commando at V.F.P. Power Station
4* Commando visits Witwatersrand Deep (R.D.Mail 13.2.1922)
5* Rand Daily Mail 7.2.1922
6* ibid 8.2.1922

the commandos.[1]

Although the authorities yet hoped that the commando system would, by and large, help law and order,[2] the situation between commandos on the one hand and police, scabs and officials on the other, deteriorated rapidly after Smuts had taken the side of the Chamber of Mines and told the men to return to work. On 19.2.1922 an ugly situation developed in Newlands when the Newlands commando and other rabble surrounded a detatchment of police who had been pursuing some strikers. The police escaped only by giving up their prisoners and declaring that they wished to make no arrest.[3] A new spirit of militancy among the commandos grew rapidly. Police were discouraged from raiding the Fordsburg strike headquarters when a menacing commando protected the building,[4] and police attempting to arrest strikers in Brakpan had to beat a hasty retreat when faced with members of the local commando.[5]

Far more important, and a matter which was subsequently blamed for all the violence that followed, was the police interference with the great Germiston demonstration of 10,000 strikers on 21.2.1922. A score of commandos marched to Germiston to take part, and a stunt by the Fordsburg commando caused the police to intervene. The Fordsburg Commando brought "two men, dusty and dejected, carrying a black board inscribed 'we are scabs' ... strongly flanked by strikers .. They were subjected to jeers and insults, and anathematised by the womenfolk."[6] Six mounted policemen arrived,[7] and the crowd, thinking that the 'scabs' were going to be taken away, began hitting the police horses with sticks. When the police retreated, the crowd threw a shower of stones at them. A sergeant was hit and

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1* House of Assembly 22.2.1922 Hansard
2* The strikers after route marches were too tired to cause trouble, it was argued by Hendrikz (R.D.Mail 8.2.1922)
3* Story in Rand Daily Mail 20.2.1922
4* Story in Rand Daily Mail 22.2.1922
5* Story in The Star 23.2.1922
6* Story in Rand Daily Mail 22.2.1922
7* The police later said that the detatchment arrived only to make enquiries with the strike leaders. (R.D.Mail 22.2.1922)

injured. Fearing police reprisals, the strikers armed themselves with branches torn off trees, wooden pailings from a local timber yard, and bits of iron. The strike leaders George and Thompson took the two 'scabs' to the police. They protested that they did not want police protection, but wanted to go home with the strikers.[1] The incident closed, but hard feeling had been roused on both sides.

For some days the police tried to prevent similar incidents. At a demonstration of commandos at Denver two days later, the police arrived, but kept apart. When the Jeppe Commando marched home along Jules Street, the mounted police took another route.[2] But clashes were almost inevitable. A group of extremist commando members wanted trouble. By 22.2.1922, 18 men were in the Fort on charges of assault or inciting to public violence, and most of them were strike leaders. Commandoe were publically told to disregard police warnings.[3] Dynamite explosions along the Rand had been more frequent, the gelatine being no longer harmlessly detonated in the veld.[4]

The police decided to take a stronger line with commandos[5] and the first large scale clash occurred on 27.2.1922, when a police detatchment at Angelo railway station ordered a commando to disperse. A fight with batons, sticks, sjamboks, loaded canes, cat-o-nine-tails developed, and many were injured. The police took 23 prisoners.[6] Another commando, 300 strong, was met near the New State Areas, Springs, and ordered to turn back.[7] It did so. The police also took a firmer stand with individuals committing assaults.[8] A strike meeting at Modder Deep was broken up.[9]

The firmer police action resulted from statements from

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1 • It is not sure whether they were real scabs or strikers playing a stunt.
2• The Star 24.2.1922
3• J. Richardson to Fordsburg commando (R.D.Mail 23.2.1922)
4• e.g. on 21.2.1922 sabatours dynamited the power line between the V.F.F. Power Station and the Geduld Mines (The Star 22.2.1922)
5• 'leading mine official' (R.D.Mail 28.2.1922)
6 • R.D.Mail 28.2.1922. None of the prisoners taken at Angelo were ever brought to trial (The Story of a Crime page 23)
7 • R.D.Mail 28.2.1922
9 • ibid
8 • see below

police chief Truter and General Smuts. Truter did not make clear whether all commandos were to be dispersed,[1] but the next day, in Parliament, Smuts cleared the situation a bit when he said that commandos were in contravention of the law, and if necessary, if these commandos continued to interfere with the resumption of work by people who were so inclined, the commandos would be dispersed by the police.[2] This statement contained too many 'ifs' to deter the hotbloods, when even in passive Witbank the local strike commando stopped a train,[3] and molestation of scabs by commando detatchments increased. Police had to raid strike headquarters in Benoni, Krugersdorp and Springs[4] to rescue kidnapped workers.[5] The Brakpan commando started a scab hunt, and tore alleged scabs out of their homes. When police arrived to rescue the scabs, there was a scuffle with 400 strikers,[6] and the police had to withdraw without prisoners.

In this menacing situation the Boksburg tragedy, when the police shot dead three strikers outside the Boksburg goal,[7] changed matters radically for the worse. There was no mistaking the danger in the anger which caused 15,000 mourners, in total silence under a boiling Rand summer sun on 2.3.1922, to tread, commando after commando, "foot, mounted and cyclists, each with its banner designating its district and with its officers at its head ... a women's commando carried a banner 'Our comrades, murdered in cold blood by the police.'"[8] Another banner protested against the "horrible action of the police in shooting down [illegible]enceless men."[9] The Pretoria railway workshops emptied as workers attended a joint religious service and meeting in the Pretoria City Hall at which the mayor presided and passed a motion of condolence.[10] Demands that the police officer

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1* Rand Daily Mail 23.2.1922
2* House of Assembly 23.2.1922 Hansard
3* The Star 22.2.1922
4* ibid 23.2.1922
5* ibid
6* The Star 22.2.1922
7* This incident has been discussed above.
8* Rand Daily Mail 5.3.1922
9* The International 4.3.1922
10* Rand Daily Mail 5.3.1922

responsible be tried were made[1], and a government inquiry was demanded[2]. The inquests were a debacle, with a retired magistrate, who had witnessed the shootings, again and again standing up in the public benches and stating that the police had shot without provocation[3]. But the police officer was not removed[4], and he retained his East Rand command.

The commandos replied by massing in a 5,000 men strong rally on the Union Ground, Johannesburg, on 7.3.1922. Speeches were made referring to the "Boksburg murder of our comrades." and strike leader Thompson called upon the government to remove the armed forces from the Rand[5].

With the situation so menacing, police were rushed into the Rand by the hundreds frome other parts of the Union. Five hundred police were said to have arrived on the East Rand on 1.3.1922. But police alone could not deal with what had grown into a national emergency. They showed bad judgement and jitters in the crisis, arresting 50 persons and then releasing 50 of them without making any charges[6]. When strategic arrests on the Rand might have strangled the agitation, the police struck at [7]ank, where the strike was already dead. Even lawabiding [8]ikers resented and hampered the police believing that they had been brought up to break the new strike.

Conditions continued to grow worse. On 7.3.1922 armed commandos and police with fixed bayonets were facing each other in the centre of Johannesburg. In skirmishes in Rissik Street a boy received a bayonet wound, and a section of the Fordsburg Commando rushed down Rissik Street at the double, firing revolver shots into the air. A striker ran up to the police lines and invited the constables to shoot[9]. They did not, and the incident passed off, but it had been a close thing.

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1. S.A. Typo Union (East Rand branch) Rand Daily Mail 4.3.1922
2. Brakpan meeting (Rand Daily Mail 7.3.1922)
3. The Star 6.3.1922
4. General Smuts in House of Assembly 7.3.1922 Hansard
5. Martial Law Inquiry Commission 1922 para 185.
6. Rand Daily Mail 1.3.1922
7. ibid
8. Evidence by F.E. Pelts in Rex vs H.F. Langley
9. The Star 7.3.1922

Strike commandos were pulling out haircutters, waitresses shop assistants and other types of workers from Johannesburg and Reef shops.[1] The business and industrial life of the Rand was being brought to a standstill.[2] Smuts in Cape Town accused the strikers of marching up and down Johannesburg, "trying to interfere with law abiding citizens and to provoke the police."[3] It was necessary for the police to take a much firmer stand, or resign all authority, for the commandos were acting as if no police or lawcourts existed. The East Rand Express commented: "When, by threat and intimidation, thousands of men and women have to abandon their jobs ... it is a direct challenge to constituted authority ... The State must interfere or confees itself impotent."[4] Strikers were holding private tribunals at strike headquarters, and convicted scabs were punished. At Fordsburg a 'convicted scab' was greased and feathered,[5] and in Springs another scab was beaten-up after his trial.[6]

On 8.3.1922 the situation worsened further. A large body of 250 police were sent to prevent a commando from putting pressure on the employees of the railway workshops at Braamfontein. Along came the 'Irish' commando, about 450 men armed with sticks and clubs, and some assagias. Bloodshed threatened until the police officer allowed a deputation of strikers and police to interview the railway workers. Seventy railwaymen came out, some under protest, but fearing for their homes and families which the police could not protect.[7]

Elsewhere strikers and police exchanged bullets. A commando attacking the New Primrose Compound shot three Natives dead and wounded many more, but in turn was met with police and mine officials' slugs. Two strikers, Webbstock and Olivier, were killed, and two seriously wounded. Generally, however,

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1* The Star 7.3.1922
2* ibid
3* House of Assembly 7.3.1922 Hansard
4* East Rand Express 8.3.1922
5* Rand Daily Mail 8.3.1922
6* ibid 7.3.1922
7* ibid 9.3.1922

the commandos were not yet prepared to shoot it out with the police. At Glen Deep and at Rose Deep Compounds, commandos intimidated Natives, but retreated when police detatchments came up.[1] Other commandos had no intention whatsoever of committing violence. The Tailors Commando would do no more than march around whistling "The Marseillaise."[2] The Liquor and Catering Trades Commando sent a member into the Rand Club, Johannesburg, to talk to barmen still working, and when this member was rudely ejected, the commando was so hurt that it wrote to the newspapers in protest.[3] These and a number of similar commandos melted away when Martial Law was declared, and in the two days of violence which preceeded that declaration, played no part in the assaults on Natives, scabs and officials. This was the work of the older commandos, mainly from the poorer class districts, which contained a strong element of hooligans. On 9.3.1922 Smuts considered that "it is now the hooligans binding themselves together as so-called commandos trying to get control - and they largely are in control - and these sad events which have taken place ... are to be put down to (their) account more than to the other classes of workers."[4] The Transvaal Native Congress held that the "hooligan element among the strikers without control" was doing the assaulting and murdering.[5]

The strikers blamed the police for the violence which characterised the closing weeks of the strike. They were alleged to have incited strikers to acts of violence,[6] to give Smuts an excuse to declare Martial Law, to have paid railway fares for scabs,[7] to have assaulted civilians,[8] to have in fact been the government's agents provocateurs.[9] Strikers

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1. The Star 9.3.1922
2. Rand Daily Mail 10.3.1922
3. ibid 10.3.1922
4. House of Assembly 9.3.1922 Hansard
5. Rand Daily Mail 10.3.1922
6. Van der Vyver in Johannesburg Town Hall (The Star .3.2.1922)
7. Boydell in House of Assembly 21.2.1922 Hansard
8. Jeppe Extension case (R.D.Mail 23.2.1922)
9. Madeley in House of Assembly 22.2.1922 Hansard

in later court trials alleged that they took up arms on 10.3.1922 to protect themselves against the police. The presence of large bodies of police at strikers' meetings during the industrial struggle did heighten tension[1], and the police shootings of the three strikers on 28.2.1922 was a prime factor in creating the atmosphere which made the revolt possible. The importance of this event can be exaggerated, however. Serious disorders predated the Boksburg shootings. After the strike Thompson and George blamed the police interference at the Germiston demonstration of 2o.2.1922 rather than the Boksburg shootings for the enmity between police and strikers[2]. Accusations that the police were not impartial were not without foundation. Smuts admitted that the police had advised the men to return to work, an act which the strike side considered partisan[3].

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THE RAND REVOLT

Chapter VII

Thus far this thesis has considered the development of events and the build up of mass emotions, from the beginning of the strike until the outbreak of armed violence on a Rand-wide scale on the morning of 10.3.1922. It has shown that the situation all along the Rand, but particularily in Fordsburg, in Newlands, in Vrededorp, in Boksburg, in Benoni and in Brakpan was highly inflamable, and that incidents of violence had become so common that by the night of March 9 a state of anarchy existed on the Rand, not easily distinguishable from actual rebellion. Firearms had replaced sticks and mobs had replaced thugs and small gangs. All indications were that violence and bloodshed would continue and even increase on the day following, and that with the declaration of Martial Law, which was expected hourly, many desperate men would prefer a fight to a tame submission, to the bitterness of defeat after a long strain and many privations, and to a White terror of victimization, by the Chamber of Mines, of mine workers active in the strike.

But in the early hours of March 10, before day broke or Martial Law was proclaimed, something more happened. A planned uprising took place, its object being the overthrow of the government, the defeat of the military, and the capture of the Rand and of Pretoria. The scale of this uprising can be gauged from the fact that 19,124 men were called up or used to crush it.[1*]

Labourites from that time to this have denied that there was a revolt, or anything like it. The most they have admitted is that "there were very serious errors on the part of the men

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1* These included: Permanent force 4,991. Active Citizen Force and Class A Reserve 4,774. Commandos (Class B Reserve) 6,416. South African Police 2,654. Special constables 964. Civic Guard 3,714 (The Round Table Volume XII page 667)

who had been goaded to desperation."[1] Thompson and George told the Martial Law Commission: "We do not agree that anything in the nature of an organised revolt took place, and we are further of the opinion that the measure of public violence that did occur was the direct and only possible result of the attitude of the Government and the Chamber of Mines who always opposed us , and appeared to us throughout the dispute to be following a common police aimed at the crippling of trade unionism."[2] Others have argued that the violence of March 10-14 was merely the continuation of the violence between police and strikers which had begun with the Boksburg shootings, on 28.2.1922.

This sort of viewpoint has been to some extent logically possible because the details of the plot to revolt have been by no means clear, and the degree to which the plot to revolt was implimented in action has been even more obscure. Only a handful of strikers knew, before 10.3.1922, of the plot to rebel, and even fewer knew on what day and hour the signal to rise in rebellion was going to be given.

The outbreak of the revolt was so intermingled in the prevailing disorder and violence, it was so poorly supported by the commando leaders who were supposed to lead their armed mine workers into action, and so often ignored by other commando leaders when they discovered what was going on, that the outbreak is not easily recognisable as a revolt at all, or easily extracted from the general confusion.

Nevertheless a group of strikers were implicated in a plot to revolt, and the plot was carried out to some extent. Evidence at the trials of strikers up for murder, sedition and assault, besides high treason, shows clearly that the outbreak was partly an organised attempt to upset the government, and partly a spontaneous movement of despair which the events of

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1. e.g. J.W. Keller, organising secretary, Rhodesian Railway Workers Union. Rand Daily Mail 26.6.1922, and 20.7.1923
2. Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 106.

February and March had been leading up to.

The revolt was caused by a combination of two forces - the mass of strikers having been worked up to such a pitch by various incidents that they were prepared to take part in, or allow any violence in their name, any defiance of constituted authority, and the decision of a small group of commando leaders to take over control of the Rand in the hope that the Free State burgers and Nationalists throughout the country would come to their assistance and help overthrow the government of General Smuts. The first supplied the condition of the revolt, the second supplied its time.

The revolt lasted from March 10 to March 14, when the last centres of resistance were mopped up by the military and police. Immediately after, the newspapers were full of stories about the whole affair having been a Bolshevik rising[1*] In the House of Assembly on 19.3.1922, Smuts said that the aim of the "Red revolutionaries" had been to establish "a sort of Soviet Republic." In the Trades Hall in Rissik Street, Johannesburg, were found robes which, the newspapers claimed, were to have been used by the revolutionaries' Chief Justice and their Public Executioner. When passions had subsided, it was pointed out that these robes of "Justice" and "Liberty" were costumes that had been used for years by girls in the annual May Labour Day and other processions[2*]. The idea that it had been a Bolshevik rising[3*] gained some substance from the fact that two Bolsheviks, Fisher and Spendiff, had led the last ditch resistance in Fordsburg, and then had committed suicide, or else had been killed in spectacular fashion. Those on the Chamber of Mines side, who might have felt conscious stricken

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1* On 21.2.1922 "Funds and influences of Bolshevik origin are strongly suspected in responsible quarters to have been at work" (The Star 22.2.1922)

2* "The Story of a Crime" page 34. For public hysteria about Reds see also page 47 and "Comrade Bill" pages 278-281.

3* Also people noted that the headquarters of the Communist Party in Johannesburg, and the office of the Augmented Executive throughout the strike, were in the same room - Room 4 of the Trades Hall (Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 137)

at the idea of the strikers having been driven by despair and non-compromise into violence, naturally played up the news that the revolt had been planned in Russia long before, and that the unyielding front of the Chamber in the last weeks of the strike had had nothing to do with it. On the other hand, the trade unionists, disliking the tag of having been the tools of the Bolsheviks, consistently refused to admit that there had been any revolt at all.

The truth is that, while the Bolsheviks on the Rand played a disproportionately large part in the revolt, the uprising was not a Bolshevik effort aimed at setting up a Bolshevik state. There were just not enough Rand Bolsheviks to start a revolution. Since labour had never got more than 65 votes[1] in an election constituency. The revolt was an uprising, mainly of despair, by the militantly inclined and organised of the strikers, who thought that force was the only way in which the workers' cause could be saved from utter humiliation by the triumphant Chamber of Mines.

An argument used to prove that it had been a Bolshevik revolt was that the strikers could not have got the thousands of guns and rounds of ammunition except from overseas, and that no one but Russia would have supplied this equipment.[2] But no proof was ever found of supplies of guns having been smuggled into the Union, and the rifles, revolvers and ammunition were quite easily accounted for by guns and ammunition belonging to the strikers themselves or else taken from private householders when the revolt broke out, or by guns taken from the hundreds of police, and the number of police stations, which were captured. In addition the strikers twice raided the Johannesburg Drill Hall and got many of their rifles from there

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1. 'The Story of a Crime' page 102.
2. The police captured 1,150 rifles, 43,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, 231 shotguns and 6,000 rounds of shot gun ammunition, 745 revolvers and 13,000 rounds, and one German make machine gun. (Round Table, April 31,1922) The Martial Law Commission reported that "only 387 rifles and 1,251 revolvers and other arms were captured." (paragraph 75)

The guns captured from the strikers by the military were such a pot-porri of weapons, ancient and modern, sporting rifles, Martini Henrys, tiny pistols generally used against burglars, as one would expect to get from a scrounging of guns from every available source by a rebel outbreak. Many householders later gave evidence that their licenced weapons had been taken by force from them.[1] And there was plenty of evidence in court of parties of strikers looking for guns,[2] of commando members being told to bring "arms of any description" to the parades to be held before dawn on 10.3.1922.[3] The bombs which were exploded by the rebels, or later captured by the police, appear to have been all home-made affairs.[4] For instance, L.J. Nel, a striker, later gave evidence that on March 4, 1922, a strike leader named Smith told him to go to the old Cinderella Mine and "pick up some small pieces of iron and bring them back to him. I got about two cups full of short pieces of iron, bits of bolts and nuts. I asked him what he intended to do ... He said he was making bombs."[5]

While members of the Bolshevik Council of Action helped in the planning and preparation of the revolt, once the shooting started most of them disappeared or were rounded up by the authorities. Only three, Fisher, Spendiff and Mannie Ryan, played a conspicuous part in the revolt itself. Yet the rebels were generally called Reds, even during the revolt, because it was usually assumed that workmen who rebelled were Reds. Thus C.W. Lundin, chairman, Relief Committee, Brakpan, gave evidence: "It was dangerous for a policeman to be in the streets after in Brakpan on the 10th. after the Reds returned ... I knew the Strike Committee had been put out by the Reds."[6]

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ts after in Brakpan on the 10th. after the Reds returned ...
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knew the Strike Committee had been put out by the Reds."

2* P. du Plessis (Rex vs Carter and Others)
3* J. Thompson (Rex vs Carter and Others)
4* The acting chief inspector of Explosives in Johannesburg, N.B.Jackson, who examined 30 bombs captured at the Market Hall, Fordsburg, gave evidence that they were home-made (Rex vs A.F.Davies)
5*(Rex vs P.Carter and Others)
6* (Rex vs E.W.Gibbs)

The Bolsheviks, through their Council of Action, played a large part in creating the situation which made a group of commando leaders decide to rebel. Col.A.E.Trigger, police chief on the Rand, said that the Council "was responsible for the general strike which started on March 7. The general strike helped to precipitate the revolution ... In addition to the Council of Action there were Committees of Action spread along the Reef. The object of the general strike was to clear the ground and to take control of affairs."[1] While it is true that "the Council of Action with the commandos forced the Augmented Executive to call a general strike without consulting the workers,"[2] and that the despair caused by the failure of the general strike enabled the rebels to go ahead in the assurance that they would at least get a measure of support from the men when the order to attack the police was given, it must be remembered, when deciding the part the Bolsheviks played in the revolt, that the plan to revolt pre-dated the general strike, and that when the Council of Action members tried to play a leading part in the organisation of the proposed revolt, they were roughly pushed aside by the commando leaders.

When the revolt broke out on 10.3.1922, it was only in Fordsburg that members of the Council of Action dominated the rebellion. Stories later abounded of how Percy Fisher directed operations there.[3] From the evidence of rebels who had been in the Fordsburg area during the revolt, it would seem that scores of men assisted in the rebellion only because Fisher was at their back all the time threatening to shoot them if they did not go on.[4] Of course Fisher was the obvious person to blame, seeing that he died in the last assault, but even so he does appear to have dominated Fordsburg. In the Fordsburg Market Hall M.J.Green, Fisher, Spendiff, "Taffy" Long and a Van As set themselves up as a self styled "Big Five"[5], and proceeded

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1. evidence in Rex vs L.J.Ryan
2. "A First Account of Labour Organisation in S.Africa." p.50.
3. Cons.A.de Kock in Rex vs A.F. Davies is an example
4. L.W.Petzer in Rex vs L.W.Petzer
5. P.J. Pienaar (Rex vs M.J.Green)

to send round commands to the various rebel centres, which were sometimes ignored.[1] The "Big Five"[2] in which Fisher was the leading spirit, had no popular authority, and was merely an attempt by five strike leaders to get some sort of centralised control over a revolt which had really broken up into a lot of little revolts with very little co-ordination.

In the overall picture the Bolsheviks did not cause or lead the revolt. "It is true that towards the end of the strike the Trade Unions lost control and a handful of irresponsible orators appeared to be exercising some influence. But they (the Bolshevists) did not cause the outbreak any more than the foam on the crest of the wave is a cause of the storm; and when the outbreak started they became, with two exceptions, conspicious by their absence."[3]

The mass of the strikers who took part in the revolt were not Bolsheviks fighting for a new order, yet they risked their lives and fought policemen and fellow citizens in the Active Citizen Force regiments, and shot at fellow Randites who were patrolling the streets to prevent crime. In most cases these were obviously not the actions of spontaneous anger, even allowing for the fact that the mine workers were agitated after two dragging months of unemployment, after the insults of the Chamber of Mines, and after the pro-employer pronouncements of the government. Rand miners did not shoot people when they were exhausted by waiting, and angry at insults, unless they were led - and that points to a planned revolt. Doubtlessly many of the strikers took up arms against the soldiers with loathing, and went through the motions of rebellion only because they considered that it was the decent thing to do, to stand beside those of their fellow workers on strike who had decided to shoot it out. Sir John Garneworthy, leader of the Brakpan com

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1. Fisher sent a motor cyclist to Florida with the message "Fisher of Fordsburg demands the Florida must be taken." (E.R. Hipperts in Rex vs. E.R.Hipperts) The "Big Five" gave the order for the attack on Ellis Park on 11.3.1922 which resulted in many deaths (McLoughlin in Rex vs.M.A.C.McLoughlin.
2. other witnesses gave other "Big Fives"
3. "The Story of a Crime" page 43.

-mando, sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, wrote from goal two years later: "My imprisonment here I can endure with a good heart and clear conscience, knowing that in my view, I struck for a good cause and for the betterment of myself and my fellow workers, and did not climb down or run away at the critical moment."[1*] And, as has been shown, many strikers had been forced into the less lawful commandos, and could not get out when the rebellion started.

Who were the leaders of the revolt? Who choose to shoot it out? Evidence is scanty. The correspondence which there must have been between strike leaders was seized by the police when the various workers' headquarters were captured, and is now inaccessable in the State Archives. The strike leaders destroyed any incriminating evidence - of plotting against the state - as quickly as they could, or else are still unwilling to give public perusal to such evidence as they have preserved. The evidence which the writer had to rely on, court records, shows a planned revolt, but the witnesses merely mentioned the revolt as part of evidence for another purpose, and the piecing together of all the references still gives only an outline. The rebels who knew all the facts were unaturally unwilling to reveal the full story in court, since such evidence might have led to court proceedings against them.

The story of the morning of March 10, when the revolt began, is told by many witnesses. Before, and just after dawn on March 10, on many parts of the Rand, commandos met at selected points, armed with rifles and revolvers, bombs, sticks and stones, and then, later in the day, in some cases soon after dawn, they went into action, shooting at and capturing police, barracading police stations and bombing them, attacking troops and special constables. Large bodies of police surrendered or were surrounded, so that on March 11 and 12 the rebels were in control of much of the Reef, which had to be recaptured

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1* Garnsworthy to the Rev. Hattingh, Risaik Street, Johannesburg. 8.5.1922. Letter in files of S.A. Trade Union Council.

by government forces from March 12 to 14, when the last rebel stronghold in Fordsburg was taken.

The revolt started when a number of commandos in the Johannesburg area and on the near East Rand formed up before dawn on 10.3.1922, with such guns as they had been able to muster. They were obeying the commands of their commando leaders. The commando leaders in their turn were obeying the orders of a commandant general, a mine worker named A.A.Sandham, who had previously instructed them to collect their men for action when he sent a certain message to them. A large number of commando leaders, especially on the far East and West Rands, refused to call up their men when they got Sandham's message, and such commandos never went into action.

Most of the thousands of strikers involved appear not to have known precisely what they were being assembled for. A typical case was 'private' G.Z.Slabbert: "I heard from some men (on March 9) that we should all gather ... at three next morning with arms if we possessed such. At about 2.30 a.m. I went ... we had been told that there was danger of a Native rising... I went ... we were told to go off in groups of four and catch scabs."[1] Even such a prominent striker as J. Cowan, mayor of Springs, seconder of the "Republic Resolution", and chairman of the Springs District Strike Committee, said: "I knew nothing about the outbreak of the revolution until after it started."[2] No more did C.W.Lundin, chairman of the Brakpan Relief Committee, who said "The Strike Committee (at Brakpan) knew nothing about the revolution and had nothing to do with it after it broke out."[3] Mr. G. Hills M.P.C. told the Martial Law Commission: "I do not think that the rank and file thought for a moment they would be involved in anything like a revolution ... their only idea was to hold the mines and to hold out

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1* Rex vs G.Z.Slabbert
2* Rex vs C.W.Gibbs
3* ibid

the men and see if they could make terms ... They did not realise that it was open defiance of the government of the country to take such action."[1]

Other strikers appear to have been better informed. A witness before the Martial Law Commission said that the commando to which he belonged was told by its leader that "if they could take the police stations and hold the towns for 24 hours, the men from the backveld would be in and arm and equip those who did not possess rifles and ammunition. The ultimate object was to fight for a republic in order to overthrow the government and the capitalistic classes (he said)...12,000 or 13,000 men from the back veld were to join them."[2]

A great many commando members appear to have been enticed out on March 10 by threats of a Native rising, or by suggestions that another "Big Pull" of scabs would take place. The story of how one group of strikers were caught up in the revolt is told by a pumpman on strike, A.V.Kimber. On 8.3.1922 he attended a meeting of ex-servicemen at the Grand Hotel, Boksburg. "Carter (a strike leader) said that a commando of ex-servicemen was to be formed as a protection to ourselves." This new commando paraded on 9.3.1922 at Boksburg and on dismissal was told to parade at 3 a.m. next day. From the questio-ns which "men ...asked Glencross (an officer)", there were plenty of rumours about a rebellion. Glencross "was asked what we were to bring. The reply was "Bring what you've got." He was asked if there would be any arms ... He replied that that was not his business ... People asked him if there were any arms to be got hold of. Next morning I paraded at 3 a.m.[3] (with) a couple of hundred (others) ... We then went to the Trades Hall ...(Carter) was getting the men into bunches of fives

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1. Martial Law Inquiry 1922 paragraph 125
2. ibid para 48.
3. The time of night or the bringing of arms did not by themselves suggest a revolution coup d'etat to the strikers in the commandos, since the commandos had been meeting at all hours of the night, armed with revolvers and chains, for some time. (Capt.J.M.L.Pulford S.A.P. District Commandant. East Rand. evidence in Rex vs.P.Pagan and others)

and each group was being detailed off by him to get out on a scab hunt ...I saw ... Van der Merwe issuing rifles to the men in the Hall. ... Ammunition was issued as well ... There was nothing to indicate to me any intention to go into rebellion or revolution." Kimber must have known that rifles were not necessary for a scab hunt. Nor were the rifles being issued, in this case, to protect strikers from Natives. Kimber said: "I had not heard any opinion expressed to that time as to danger of Native risings."[1a*] It is clear that the strike leaders thought it better not to use the word "revolt" generally, since it would put the squeamish strikers off. Carter told E.R.Rowles that groups of five must find a scab whose name they were given "persuade him to come out on strike, and if he refused give him a dashed good hiding."[1*] But to an obviously different sort of striker, S.A.Cloete, Carter gave different instructions when he provided Cloete with a rifle and 10 rounds. Cloete was "to go into Cuthberts' door ...(Carter) said I was to stay there and someone would come and take us to where we had to go and fight."[2*]

Carter's idea was obviously to arm the weaker strikers under pretence that they were going to beat up scabs, send them out with extremists, and have them committed to rebellion by a clash with the police before they had quite got the sleep out of their eyes.[3*]

This is precisely what happened. At about dawn a police patrol, about 25 men strong, galloped down the road in Boksburg towards the hall where Carter had been dealing out rifles. A striker named Smith threw a home made bomb from a balcony. It burst in front of the police, who wheeled and galloped out of

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1a* A.V.Kimber in Rex vs J.Carter and Others
1* E.R.Rowles in Rex vs J.Carter and others
2* S.A.Cloete in Rex vs J.Carter and Others
3* Another witness, L.J.Nel, said that at the parade on 9.3.22, the officers told the men to come to the parade ground at 3 a.m. and "bring rifles and revolvers whether it was Martial Law or not." Clashes with the police were anticipated. (Rex. vs.J.Carter and Others)

town, pursued by rapid firing from the strikers.[1] The police officer, Lieut. A.E.D. Dunning, said that when the bomb was thrown, "Immediately rifle fire burst out from all round ... we were expecting trouble."[2] An odd way to go about 'hunting scabs'.

Right from the earliest days of the strike, the idea of a revolt facinated the more extreme and dare-devil of the strikers. It facinated especially the Afrikaans strike commando leaders who had more faith in the rifle, and the readiness of all Afrikanderdom to follow if a "White South Africa in Danger" crusade was started, than they had in faith in trade union methods. The extreme socialists, who were 'direct actionists' as the saying of the time went, wanted a revolt regardless of its chance of success since the final struggle between Capital and Labour would in that way be brought nearer.

All plots to rebel required as a minimum that the Platteland should be prepared to send support, so that the rebels might conquer at least the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The O.F.S. burgers were believed to be particularily amenable to a revolt. A plot along these lines appears to have been considered on the day on which the strike began. A Benoni strike leader named J.G.Brummer gave evidence[3] that he went on 10.1. 1922 with three others to a Benoni house where 20-25 persons were assembled. A striker, Jack Krynauw, said: "Gentlemen, this is the strike and we are after the Vier Kleur Flag this time and General Pienaar is here and he wants a mandate." This mild suggestion of a republic gained by violence does not appear to have met with enthusiastic support, because later in the discussion, Krynauw continued that "this will be a strike movement and we must not attack the police, we must give them the --- of attacking first." A man named Bruwere then said that he was in favour of an early revolution, but the meeting

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1. S.A.Cloete in Rex vs J.Carter and Others.
2. Lieut A.E.D.Dunning in Rex vs J.Carter and Others
3. in Rex vs J. Garnsworthy

demurred and decided to await police provocation.

The court records reveal no further evidence of plots to rebel, though they must have been as common as extremists were numerous[1*], until February 25. On that day "Fisher (Council of Action), Mike Rautenbach (commandant Benoni commando) and Van Vuuren (commandant Brakpan commando)" came into the office of A.A.Sandham, afterwards said to have been the commandant-general of the rebels.[2*] "The conversation ... concerned the support of the country (backveld) in the event of an outbreak, and Van Vuuren stated that he was the 'contact' between the backveld and the strikers."

The shooting of three strikers outside Boksburg Gaol by the police on 23.2.1922 did not [illegible] start plans of revolt, but it certainly gave them a new and vital impetus.[3*] J.W. Allen gave evidence later that on the day of the funerals of the three men killed at Boksburg, there was a meeting of leaders in "the Committee Room", Springs, which included Garnsworthy (general of Brakpan Commando) and Van Vuuren (commandant of the Boksburg Commando). "We all agreed that it was too big an affair to have a command to act placed on us without deliberation (this indicates that a centralised plan for action had already been considered) and it was decided that we all visit Benoni to see the leaders there ... This was done, and we were told that a certain man (Sandham) was away and that until he returned we could do nothing further, but we were asked to attend another meeting of Commando leaders on 5.3.1922, which we did ... The man (Sandham) was still absent. Opposition to mass concerted action was put up by Garnsworthy, Boshoff, Van Vuuren

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1* On 18.1.1922 a group of 80 strikers at Boksburg Pan discussed a possible attack on the Police Station at Brakpan (G.van Schalkwijk, Rex vs J.Garnsworthy). Police chief A.E.Trigger later said that from about the middle of February "the strike movement ... was decidedly turning to that of a revolutionary nature and was taking the form of an organised movement to overthrow the authority of the government on the Witwatersrand." (evidence in Rex vs A.A.Sandham.)

2* Advocates brief in S.A.Trade Union Council offices.

3* There is every reason to believe Allen. At his trial W.Jessop M.P.C. described him as "one of the finest types of man that anyone could wish to meet ... There was practically no trouble in Springs during the revolt ... due to ...Mr. Allen."

and myself. The option was then offered us of passing a resolution that we advise a general return to work the next day, meaning unconditional surrender to the Chamber of Mines. This proposal was not entertained, the whole matter was again left in abeyance until the man (Sandham) should have returned."

In this one can see the aweful choice which those who were in the plot had to face. Many of them were respectable men with reputations for public spiritedness. They could not reveal the plot to revolt without betraying many men as good as themselves, and discrediting the whole strike movement. They could not accept the Chamber of Mines' terms after all they had been through in two bitter months of strike. The government had taken what seemed to be a partisan attitude, and therefore did not deserve any loyalty, in their opinion. It seemed to them to be a struggle of the people, the workers, against the government and moneyed interests.

A much more interesting account of another meeting on the evening of the Boksburg funerals, held in Benoni, is given by Allen in another context.[1*] The commando officers gathered in Benoni "representing the Rand from East to West with the exception of one or two centres whose representatives had had transport breakdowns." The men were bound by oath at pain of death not to divulge anything transpiring at the meeting. It was resolved to take reprisals over murders, and "it was said that certain men of authority in the Commando movement, but not in the Public eye at all ... had been in communication with the country, and had come to an understanding with individuals of some influence, the gist of which was that on a given signal the Reef would rise, take control of the various centres and hold them for 48 hours, when if successfully accomplished the country would have moved to our support, and by the very spontaneity and suddeness of the coup on a large scale, take the initiative from the authorities. In the event of unexpected stiff resistance on the Reef, the Commandos were to fall back

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1* Rex vs J. van Vuuren

on the 'Platland', keeping the forces closely engaged constantly until the promised reinforcements arrived. It was put to the meeting that after the initial brush with the Rand forces there would be very little likelihood of fighting on an extended scale, owing to the hostility to the government in the country, and that Pretoria would automatically capitulate. Even if Cape Colony and Natal remained 75 per cent. staunch to the government it was considered that the disorganisation of the government military machine would be such that before they could understand (undertake?) the big operations necessary, we would have consolidated and made secure against reaction internally, or attack from outside ... it was proposed that the O.F.S. and Transvaal should be proclaimed a 'White Republic', with equal rights for all Europeans and that the natural wealth of the country should be utilised for the state ... we were warned to be ready to act in 48 hours ' ence (from March 2) ...One person in high authority had to do a speedy journey to the O.F.S. ... for final interview there and fixing of a definate hour to be communicated to each centre, by prearranged code, on his return. His stay was protracted ...."[1*]

The story is taken up by C.C. van Vuuren, a commandant in the Brakpan commando.[2*] He gave evidence that he went with Garnsworthy, the general of the Brakpan commando, to Benoni on March 3 to a meeting where 27 persons were present, including many strike leaders. "Sandham stood up and said that before he spoke he wanted to know his position. Mike Rautenbach said that he (Sandham) was the Adjudant General from East to West ... Sandham then said that he and Van der Merwe had gone to Pretoria the day before and there had been the great man of the Transvaal, he did not mention his name; that this man was willing to take action if Sandham could manage to have four men shot - General Smuts, General Japie van Deventer and 'you

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1* still Rex vs J. van Vuuren.
2* Rex vs J. Garnsworthy and Others.

know the others'.[1] He, Sandham, had promised to do this and on the following day ... he, Sandham, was going to the Free State to speak with the big men there and if after he had spoken with them and they were willing, direct action could be taken within 48 hours. Sandham then produced a small piece of paper on which was an X and his initials in one corner and his name on the other and said that when each man got a similar piece of paper they would have to take direct action which would be at 5 a.m. on the date to be fixed."[2]

On March 5, again according to Allen, "we had another meeting at Benoni ... of East Rand officers." There was talk of the weakness of certain districts, including Springs. "The alternative was then put to this meeting of unconditional surrender and a return to work the next day on the Chamber's terms. ... we were assured that the movement had advanced so far that any withdrawal on the Reef would be a breech of faith in our part of the country and the leaders, and that consequently[3] certain areas were going to act willy-nilly."

There appear to have been meetings of plotters every day,[4] but on 8.3.1922 a most important gathering took place in Johannesburg. On that day a despatch rider gave 'General' Garnsworthy of Brakpan (according to his later evidence)[5] a note which said "Owing to the unrest among the Natives all commandants are urgently required at the Trades Hall, Johannesburg, at 8 p.m." There "it was decided that they form a Committee of Affairs - one for each district to go into this matter of Natives." This talk about Native trouble was merely a blind. Soon the commandants and Percy Fisher, of the Council of Action, went into a separate room. "There it was announced by Sandham that this was not a meeting to deal with Natives, but

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1* Garnsworthy, telling the story of the same meeting, said that Sandham stated that he "had been in the Free State, and asked a certain man if he would take charge, and said this man said he would on condition that four men had to be captured (1) Prime Minister (2) Col. Wents (3) Van Deventer (4) Coen Botha (Rex vs J.Garnsworthy)

2* Rex vs J. Garnsworthy and Others

3* Rex vs J.van Vuuren

4* See Martial Law Inquiry paras 34,37,38,39.

5* Rex vs J.Garnsworthy.

the time for action had come." The man in the Free State had agreed to take over. "He (Sandham) told us to go home but to expect a piece of paper that would signify the hour and date[1*] He said ...'when you get this piece of paper you step in and get your commando together and disarm the Police - after you have disarmed the police you take possession of the town, post your pickets and take possession of all properties. Picket these properties and return to the veldt with your main body.' Sandham then said that (a)General Pienaar was going to take charge. "When you get possession of the paper at the hour on the paper I will step down ... General Pienaar will take charge, hold the town (probably Johannesburg, where the meeting was) for 48 hours, reinforcements will arrive from the Free State - also there is one Special General detailed, owing to him stating th.[illegible]e had friends in the air force - who is to take a party of men and keep the aeroplanes down as much as possible. This man was 'Jack Schreece'"

This belief that thousands of burgers would stream across the Vaal to help the strikers is difficult to account for. The assurances to the commando leaders that this would be so, given by commander-in-chief Sandham and general-of-the-central -commandos Erasmus, did not have the backing of probability which sensible men would require in ordinary times. However, the strikers at the end of February and beginning of March were in a highly emotional, irrational state, and sufficiently desperate to grasp at straws. One striker of prominance, G. Brider went about preaching that help for the strikers was expected even from America.[2*] The "secret" that burgers from the Free State would come to support a Rand revolt was supposed to be

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1* Allen, in his evidence, said that Van Vuuren told him that the meeting had decided on concerted action on 10.3.1922 at 4 a.m.

2* "Brider said 'we must wait and see what America would do. He said that America would come along and wipe the English flag out." (Evidence by H.Smith in Rex vs G. Brider)

kept by the plotters under pain of death, but swashbucklers like the most prominent of the commando 'generals', R.B.Erasmus, could not help letting it out. At a strike meeting before the revolt he said that "he had enough men from the Free State to overrun Johannesburg in a day."[1] Erasmus told another meeting of strikers in the Newlands Bioscope Hall on 9.3.1922 that he had just returned from the Free State where things were going well, and that 17,000 burgers were ready to come up and help.[2]

Despite all attempts at secrecy, it was generally well known on 9.3.1922, the day before the outbreak, that something like a revolt was about to break out. There were enough hints in the air. Apart from Erasmus' indiscretions, G.E.Carter, a Boksburg demagogue, addressing a large crowd outside Boksburg goal on 9.3.1922, said that anything might happen in the next 24 hours, that they must be prepared, if necessary, to sacrifice their lives for the cause.[3] A policeman heard Carter tell another group of strikers: "Whatever you are called upon to do in the next 24 hours, do it without hesitation."[4] The police had warning of a revolt, as is shown by their hurried sandbagging and fortifying of their stations at Fordsburg and Newlands. The garrison at the Newlands Police Station had information that the station would be attacked at midnight 9.3.1922.[5] That information was just a few hours out.

Up to the last minute the strike leaders were still trying to organise outside support. The commander-in-chief Sandham made visits to the Free State and to Pretoria to try to get assured support. On 8.3.1922 Sandham and Erasmus went to the Free State withe others, in two motor cars.[6] At Frankfort Sand-

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1 * Evidence of A.E.Trigger in Rex vs R.P.Erasmus
2 * B.Pouche in evidence at Rex ve A.A.Sandham
3 * Det.Head Cons.A.Baker in Rex vs.G.E.Carter and Others
4 * I. Brundrett, sub inspector S.A.P. in Rex vs G.E.Carter and Others.
5 * Serg.T.McLean Bell. Rex vs C.F.Liebenberg and Others.
6 * H.van Reenen. Rex vs H.van Reenen van Niekerk.

ham addressed a meeting and in the afternoon went to the farm of one Wessel Wessels. There a secret conference was held between Sandham, Erasmus, Wessel Wessels and a Van der Merwe at which even Erasm[illegible] adjutant, H.van Reenen van Niekerk, was excluded. Sandham returned to the Rand and commandeered a taxi driver T.A.Willis, to drive him to Pretoria on several occasions.[1] On 8.3.1922 Sandham and others went to the offices of Ons Vaderland Pers in Pretoria; on 9.3.1922 they went to the house of a man named Pienaar. "Just before leaving Pretoria," said taxi driver Willis, "Sandham told me to stop. The passengers got out, walked away into the veld and came back with bags and portmanteaus." Later Willis found some Metford cartridges on the floor of the back seat. This sorry little heap of ammunition was just about the only "outside help" which the rebels ever received.

Final preparations for the revolt were made during the night of March 9-10. C.H. Weideman gave evidence that on that night a meeting was held in his house in Fordsburg. "General Erasmus, Commandant Venter, Jan Lingenfelder and others were present. The meeting lasted until about 2 a.m. After the meeting I spoke to (Erasmus) who told me that they were going to attack the police that morning."[2] This story is confirmed by two other witnesses. G.P.Ceronia, a commando private, said that after the meeting in Weideman's house, "Lingerfelder came and told me that there was to be an attack on the police the next morning."[3] J.P.Viljoen said that before the meeting in Weideman's house, "a meeting was held on the kopjies at Vrededorp at which were Erasmus, Venter, Lingerfelder, Van der Walt, Ingericht, Harry Dunn, Van Niekerk, Alfred Church and myself. Erasmus addressed the meeting at 9.30 p.m. and said we could not wait longer for the general from Benoni and said a big move-

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1. T.A.Willis (Rex vs A.A.Sandham)
3. G.P.Ceronia in Rex vs A.A.Sandham
2. C.H.Weideman in Rex vs A.A.Sandham

ment was on that next morning at a quarter to five, a general attack would occur from Springs to Randfontein, the men from East and West concentrating on Johannesburg where we should not begin until 6 p.m. when an attack would be made on the police at the Show Ground. After some discussion (Sandham) arrived in a motor car and was introduced as General-in-Chief from Benoni." The meeting then adjourned to Weideman's house at the suggestion of Sandham. At the house "Erasmus ... asked (Sandham) if he had received an official report about the aeroplanes ....Accused Sandham replied 'Yes' thank God the aeroplanes are over the -ell and added that he had a report to that effect in his p- et. Church asked Sandham why local leaders hadn't been told the plan earlier. Accused (Sandham) said he was worry but leaders ought to have known as the movement had been in existance for the past two months. Sandham then said he had no more time - he had to go further - that if all worked together as one Johannesburg should fall by 11 o' clock next morning."[1]

After this meeting a further gathering was held in the Market Hall, Ford_burg. H.van Reenen van Niekerk gave evidence that at 2 a.m. on 10.3.1922 he went with Erasmus to this meeting. "There we had a meeting of officers. There were present Bob Annette, Petzer, Taffy Long ... Erasmus said that he had been through the Free State and had the support of the whole country. He said we were fighting for a White South Africa, but we must interfere with no flag....Erasmus then got some guns, about two or three, and distributed them among the men present."[2]

How the revolt got under way before dawn on 10.3.1922 is told by some commando leaders, probably more or less truthfully, in their later evidence. Garrsworthy said that at 2 p.m. on 10.3.1922 three men came into his bedroom and forced him to go to Brakpan at the point of a revolver. A despatch came through

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1. J.P.Viljoen (Rex vs A.A.Sandham)
2. Rex vs A.A.Sandham.

at 5 a.m. with a piece of paper. "The paper was typed, marked 'SAMWU R&M 5 a.m. 10 March 1922' This was the time for action[1] and a similar paper was sent to every General and Commandant on the Reef."[2]

Apparently 'General' Butler of Florida received similar instructions on the morning of 10.3.1922, but by the afternoon of the next day had done nothing. E.R. Hipperts, a leading trade unionist,[3] gave evidence that at about 5.30 p.m. on 11.3. 1922 near Aurora Mine at Florida, "I was overtaken by three men on motorcycles. They asked me where General Butler was to be found. They told me he was a traitor as Florida had not been taken ... If we did not take action that night, Newlands would come over with Erasmus and Viljoen to deal with us." To prevent this, Hipperts told them "I would get Butler to take Florida." The local commando then took the Florida police station to save the police from slaughter and left the police in charge there, dressed in mufti.

The strikers in Roodepoort also refused to rise. "That this district happily escaped the fate of other parts of the Reef is due not only to the great tack and watch fulness ... of the police, but also to the efforts of moderate and loyal men among the strikers themselves and to the general lawfulness of the public in general," the magistrate of Roodepoort told the Martial Law commission.[4] There was no fighting in the Krugersdorp area either, only one man being shot in an isolated incident.[5]

An 'officer' who refused to obey the command to revolt was L.W.Petzer, a commandant of the Fordsburg Commando. "On March 10 I was ordered by Fisher to take the men to the Fordsburg

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1* SAMWU stands for South African Mine Workers Union.
2* John Garnsworthy 19.3.1922. sworn statement exhibit No.25. S.A.Trade Unions Council files, Johannesburg.
3* a member of the S.A.Mine Workers' executive. Rex vs E.R. Hipperts.
4* Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 54.
5* ibid para 60.

Dip and the New Market and resist the police from coming through to Fordsburg. I refused to obey the order. I was then told by Fisher that I was no longer an officer. ... Fisher told me that I was not allowed to leave the building (Market Hall, Fordsburg). If I was caught outside the building I would be shot."[1*]

Despite these disappointments to those who had planned the revolt, there were many commandos which went into action against the police and military as they had been ordered to do. The result was a series of attacks on police stations and police detatchments during the day of March 10, and the two days following, when military units were also attacked. It is outside the scope of this thesis to describe the fortunes of war in every sector of the fighting, but the most important actions with be sketched, to illustrate the organisation behind the strikers' armed efforts, and to give a brief picture of what took place during the four days of fighting which climaxed the strike.

The best known actions of the revolt were the taking of the Newlands Police Station, the ambush of a police patrol in Pioneer Road, Fordsburg, the attack on the Imperial Light Horse at Ellis Park, Johannesburg, the ambush of the Transvaal Scottish at Dunswart, the massacre of mine officials and police at Brakpan Mine, and the seige of the rebels in Fordsburg by thousandse of troopsl

The rebels' first important action was the attack on the Newlands Police Station. The total police strength there was 45 men, and they were reasonably fortified and prepared. At about 4.50 a.m. on 10.3.1922 an armed party of mounted and foot men approached the station. They took up fighting positions, some kneeling, some under cover. Serg.T.McLean Bell gave evidence: "I told them they were an unlawful assembly and ordered them to disperse three times. I then ordered a volley.

1* Rex vs Lucas Willem Petzer.

The fire was returned by them. The fighting lasted until 6 a.m." Then two men approached under a white flag demanding unconditional surrdender of the police station to Commandant Viljoen. "Firing was again opened and eventually bombs were thrown from behind the walls and stables.[1] We eventually surrendered at about 7.50 a.m. We had a sergeant mortally wounded, two constables wounded and ten injured. Four horses were killed. Nearly all the ammunition was expended." Then police then lined up in front of the station. "The rebels were all around us. I estimated these men at 700 and a large percentage were armed with rifles and weapons of all descriptions."[2]

While this was happening, the Fordsburg Commando was preparing to ambush a police patrol of about 30 mounted men. Before the ambush started "A civilian on a horse rode up Crown Street (Fordsburg) and shouted out 'Everybody inside. We are going to fight' ... about ten minutes after that ... the police arrived."[3] The ambush took place at the corner of Pioneer Road and Mint Road, Fordsburg. Lance Serg.P.J.Wilkins was one who told the story. "We were all in uniform ... As we reached the corner ... we were fired on from different directions by the rebels. The firing came from the houses and corners of the streets. We were ... taken by surprise ... we were ordered to dismount, which we did ... we returned the fire. The fight continued for about an hour ... I saw two motor cars arrive from the direction of the Market Buildings. They were filled by (followed by?) a number of men walking. These men had a red cross flag and they had red crosses on their arms. They shouted to us to cease fire and we did so. Then we assisted some of our wounded into the cars and while we were doing so we put our rifles down. ... we were surrounded by about a couple of hundred rebels."[4] During the fight two constables and a civilian were killed outright, two died later in hospital, and a number of others were wounded.[5]

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1 • Det.Serg.R.James said one bomb was thrown through a window into the station (Rex vs R.P.Erasmus)
2 • Serg.T.McLean Bell in Rex vs C.F.Liebenberg and Others
3 • Mrs.I.M.Bunsey in Rex vs A.F.Davies
4 • P.J.Wilkins in Rex vs A.F.Davies
5 • Cons.E.W.Boucher in Rex vs A.F.Davies

The attack by the Jeppes Commando on the Imperial Light Horse at Ellis Park is well told by W.Urquhart in his booklet "The Outbreak." The I.L.H.recruits were being fitted out on Saturday 11,3.1922, at Ellis Park, a badly chosen spot because it was dominated by high ground. "At half-past one a sentry reported at the orderly room that a body of Reds was approaching." An officer was sent to investigate. "Eighty yards off he turned back and shouted: 'There is a party advancing on the camp.' The colonel blew his whistle, and the men who were attending to the cookhouse, and others who were being accoutred, rushed to their rifles. Firing was opened on them.... When the fight started 30 per cent. of the men had not received their uniforms. Some of them were putting on their puttees. Others were in the bath. ... The men gripped their rifles and lay down to reply to the Reds' fire. ... At half-past three, Colonel Molyneux's battalion, the Durban Light Infantry, which had just stepped off the train from the coast, came up as reinforcements."[1]

The Transvaal Scottish were cleverly ambushed by rebels on the same day. About 270 soldiers were in a train going to Benoni. When Dunswart was reached a small commando was seen riding to the south of the line. "Colonel McLeon suspected that they had been tampering with the railway line, and detrained a certain portion of the men. ... The train stopped at the level crossing at Dunswart Iron Foundry. Reds at once began to snipe from the houses and orchards in front and on both flanks."[2] Reinforcements of police under a Captain False arrived, with a 13-pounder. But the Scottish lost 12 killed and 30 wounded.

The massacre at Brakpan Mine was the "worst horror of Black Friday"[3](10.3.1922). The manager, Mr.C.D.Brodigan, received warning of an attack in the late afternoon. He had a garri-

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1. "The Outbreak",pages 83-86.
2. ibid page 83.
3. ibid pages 77-79.

son of 35 special police and mine officials. The Brakpan commando, under the command of J. Garnsworthy, arrived, deployed among the trees, and sent two men to demand possession of the mine in the name of a United & White South Africa. Brodigan refused, and for an hour and a half the garrison held out until their ammunition was exhausted. Then they put up a white flag. The members of the commando, many of whom appear to have been drunk, clubbed and shot to death eight of the garrison, and wounded a further 18.

On the day following the outbreak of the revolt it was obvious that no platteland support was coming, that the burgers were instead flocking to the government colours, that the government had troops and to spare to crush the rebels who were caught like men on a sandbank with the tide coming in. Some commandos had not risen,[1] others were isolated by Martial Law,[2] other strike leaders were giving lip service to the rebel commanders until the soldiers arrived.[3]

For those score or so strike leaders who had plotted the revolt, there was nothing to do but carry on hopelessly. On the second day of the revolt D. Colraine, a former president of the S.A.I.F. and general secretary of the Labour Party, advised Spendiff and Fisher, the rebel leaders in Fordsburg, to "desist from further hostilities against the government forces to save lives ... they felt that they could not now draw back, as they were afraid the men would come to the conclusion they had funked ... I noticed that Fisher's nerves had appeared to have the better of him." Some strikers preferred death to drawing back at this stage, or thought they did until death came too close. Others resisted bravely, if not to the last, at least after others had surrendered. Lance-Serg. A.G.Enslie, a prisoner in the Fordsburg Market Hall during the last fight of the rebellion, when General Beves had re-

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1* When the Slaughtermen's commando heard of the revolt "The men refused to take part in such proceedings and we all went home." (G.P.Ceronis in Rex vs A.A.Sandham.
2* e.g. the Nigel Commando. (R.D.Massop in Rex vs F.T.P.Cook and others)
3* E.P.Hipperts in Florida. Rex vs E.P.Hipperts.

taken the Brixton, Newlands and Auckland area and 2,300 prisoners, when Sir Jacobus van Deventer had cleared up Benoni and Brakpan, and captured 4,000 prisoners, described how a rebel in the last centre of rebel resistance, in Fordsburg, held on bitterly. "Someone called out outside that a white flag had been put up. (A.F.Davies) ran up into the Gallery and got a rifle up there and called to someone outside "Put down that white flag otherwise I will blot you out." Davies lived to stand trial, but Fisher and Spendiff, involved in the same last ditch fight, were found dead in a room in the Market Hall. That was the end of the Rand Revolt, except for some mopping up operations by the police of strikers and rebels who had fled into the country or gone into hiding to prevent arrest. They were all picked up eventually and brought to trial

The 1922 strike itself ended on March 17, some three days after the Revolt had collapsed, when the S.A.I.F. called it off. The strike had been continuing in name only, because the workers' organisation of any type had disintegrated, and the mass of strikers were fighting each other to get the greatly reduced number of jobs available. Only a handful of diehard trade unionists still listened to the authority of the S.A.I.F. which had declared the strike, but which had become hopelessly discredited in everybody's eyes as a result of the rebellion. The strike really ended when the revolt broke out on 10.3.1922 and trade unionism was swamped by violence out of the picture. The S.A.I.F. declaration of 17.3.1922 was merely a formality.

Who were the leaders of the rebellion? Most of them were ordinary mine workers who had overnight become important. They had gained positions of authority and absolute command, with military titles grandeos enough to turn any miner's head. Men of this type were General R.P.Erasmus, General J.P.Viljoen, Commandant Venter and Commandant Van Vuuren. Others, like M.W.

1* Evidence of A.G. Enslie in Rex vs A.F. Davies.

J.Lensley and J.M.Bayman, were ex-soldiers and even ex-officers of the Great War,*1 some with distinguished war records, who in the sound and fury of the time put their allegience, at least for a period*2 to the strikers' fighting units before their allegience to the state. Then there were the Bolsheviks, Fisher, Spendiff and L.J."Manie" Ryan, all of whom were miners. Ryan was perhaps the most picturesque of the rebel leaders, leading his roughneck 'Irish Commando' with the chivalry of a Spanish nobleman. After the revolt the men he had taken prisoner were ardent pleaders on his behalf.*3

The mass of rebels, who were estimated by a police officer to number up to 10,000 of the 22,000 strikers,*4 were a polygot crowd. Many were common hooligans and thugs, and a few had murderous instincts.*5 The police captured by the rebels, and kept in the Market Hall in Fordsburg, were frequently threatened with death by bloodthirsty ruffians who had to be kept back by their fellows.*6 Some were local goons, others ex-convicts, some were prepared to murder to save their own skins,*8 some were Native-haters. A few joined the rebellion to get their own back on a mine captain or mine manager whom they hated.*7 But most of the rebels were relatively honest, ignorant, naive mine workers who did not think very much of Smuts or his government, and who had become very excited and emotional after two months of strike and

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3 * e.g.J.G.Lawrie (Rex vs.L.J.Ryan)
1 * Bayman was an M.C. holder and a former officer, J.Allen was an ex-sergeant major.
2 * M.A.C.McLoughlin, ex W.O.C., and commandant of the Jeppe commando, resigned when the "Big Five" ordered an attack on the military capt at Ellis Park.(Rex vs. M.A.C.McLoughlan)
4 * A.E.Trigger in Rex vs A.F.Davies. Const. P.J. Toomey, taken prisoner, said he saw about 1,600 rebels in Fairlands alone. (Rex vs.J.J.C.Smit and Others)
5 * Det.Head Cons. A.Baker described those who attended strike meetings in Boksburg as "hooligans, unemployed, not a few criminals and political agitators." (Rex vs G.E.Carter and Others) A.P.Diedericks had to be prevented from shooting an engine driver after a derailment (Rex vs J.W.K.Jolly and Others)
6 * Rex vs H.Shaw. J.M.Stoltz went around boasting of having shot a policeman (Rex vs J.M.Stoltz)
7 * J.L.Lotter said he heard P.K.Walker say "Ik is die man wat die ou donder Brodigan (Brakpan mine manager) op die kop geslaan het met die kolf van my geweer." (Rex vs P.K.Walker)
8 * Evidence was given of a Native being shot in cold blood to prevent him giving evidence, in the case of Rex vs C.J.van Vuuren, P.D.F.Jacobs and P.J.van der Merwe.

demagogy, and who preferred going along with the boys to risking the dislike of their fellows by not joining in. In addition many of them had been conditioned for an outbreak against authority by a two months long process of growing disrespect and disobedience towards the police,[1*] which had not been sufficiently discouraged by the authorities. A large number of strikers were more or less forced to join in the rebellion. E.W.Turton, a member of the Brakpan commando, was such a one, according to his evidence. When he unsuspectingly assembled with his commando on 10.3.1928, Garnsworthy told the men: "This is no more strike. It is revolution ... anyone who refuses to take part in this will be court-marshalled and shot as a deserter."[2*] A number of the commando officers gave evidence that they accepted their posts in order to prevent hooliganism, and when hooliganism came, they kept their posts to keep hooliganism developing into bloodshed. Soon they were so involved that it was more tedious to return than go on.[3*]

Although the evidence of the trials does not reveal this, it would be naive not to realise that the large majority of strikers who took part in the rebellion did so without particular soul searchings.[4*] Here was a chance to at least have a cruck at the hated Chamber of Mines and the 'capitalists' tool' General Smuts. And there seemed to be more than a chance of success with the burgers coming and the National Party on their side, as they thought.[a4*]

But the clue to the explanation of why the rebellion was

1* See evidence of Cons.W.Yorke (Rex vs A.F.Davies), Cons. R.J.L.du Toit (Rex vs M.J.Lensley) Det.Serg.A.James (Rex vs R.P.Erasmus)

2* E.W.Turton (Rex vs.G.L. Lotter and Others)

3* A commandant in the Jeppe commando said that he stayed on duty because the commando was needed to preserve law and order in Jeppe, since the police (barracaded in the police station) "Were too cowardly to relieve us of the position in which we were placed." (J.A.Louw. Rex vs M.A.C.McLoughlan)

4* When W.K.Jolly asked the Alberton commando for 12 men to obstruct the Natal railway line, "The whole commando volunteered." (W.K.Jolly. Rex vs W.K.Jolly and Others)

a4* When the burger commandos appeared on the Rand many rebels thought they were the promised reinforcements (Martial Law Inquiry 1922 para 124.) Some rushed out to welcome them and were astonished when they were taken prisoners.

on such a large scale lies in the organisation of the commando system. If there had been no commandos, comparatively few strikers could have joined the rebellion, which anyway would have been utterly impracticable. Some of the commandos had been built up by threats. G.J.Roets gave evidence: "I became a member of Bosch's commando ... Commandant Bosch personally told me that if I did not join ... I'd be tarred and feathered."[1] Especially in the rougher strike areas like Germiston and Fordsburg, strikers were forced to join the commandos by being refused rations for their families unless they did so.[2] There was also strong moral pressure on strikers to join the commandos. Captain J.M.L. Fulford, district commander, East Rand, gave evidence: "The men on strike refusing to take part in the commandos were looked on as scabs."[3] After the revolt broke out, the commandos were even less particular about their recruiting methods. In Brakpan the local commando told members of the local strike committee that unless they joined up they would be shot.[4]

After the strike and the revolt, many labourites argued that the strikers had joined the rebellion to save themselves, their wives and their children, from a massacre by the Natives. Some of the strikers might have believed that a Native rising was imminent, but they had little reason to think so.

Throughout the strike there were many rumours circulating about an attack by Natives on White areas. These rumours were particularily strong in poor White areas which bordered on Native settlements, like Vrededorp, Fordsburg and Jeppestown.[5] In Newlands "there was a rumour of a Kaffir rising and this rumour was very rife."[6] In March these rumours became very

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1* Rex vs J.E.Cloete and Others.
2* proof of this has been given above. (Also Rex vs H.Shaw. evidence by accused). General Erasmus "gave orders that no one who did not attend drill should receive rations." (Det.Serg. C.H.Taff in Rex vs R.P.Erasmus)
3* Rex vs J. le Grange and Others)
4* W. Gibbs in Rex vs E.W.Gibbs.
5* E.L.de Hart (Rex vs J.Johnson and Others)
6* Det.Serg.D.McDonald in Rex vs J.J.Smit and Others.

strong. On 8.3.1922 "There were rumours spread by the strikers that Natives were attacking. I can's say if the rank and file believed these rumours."[1] From March 7 a rumour spread in Regents Park that the Natives were rising "and everyone turned out and this talk continued more or less until the tenth."[2] In Fordsburg on 9.3.1922 "There were still rumours of the Kaffir scare."[3]

There was no foundation in these rumours. Police chief A.E.Trigger gave evidence that he thoroughly investigated suggestions thrown out by strikers' bodies. "I found that there was no foundation whatever for them. The Natives behaved themselves admirably during the whole crisis."[4] Head Constable H.E.Mantell said of the Natives "Their conduct was most satisfactory,"[5] and so the reports continue.

Nevertheless many White strikers took the Native attack scare seriously. C.W.Lundin, a striker, gave evidence: "I took the Kaffir scare on the morning of 10.3.1922 to be genuine. At about 8.30 a.m. a man on a cycle came racing down Modder Road (Brakpan) and shouted that the Natives had broken in on the north-east side of Brakpan and were murdering women and children."[6] When the rebels captured Regents Park police station, the constable on duty was deprived of his rifle but handed back his revolver as protection"against the Natives."[7] In some areas the residents went into laager in churches and halls, believing that a Native rising was imminent.[a7]

Strikers who believed in a Native danger would not give up their arms to the police at the time of crisis. Lingerfelder, commandant of the Vrededorp commando, refused to join in the rebellion but told his men that they had to "protect

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1 • Det.Head Cons.A.J.Hoffman (Rex vs A.J.C.Kruger)
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3 • Cons.J.Snider (Rex vs J.J.C.Smit and Others)
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5 • H.E.Mantel (Rex vs Carter and Others)
6 • C.W.Lundin (Rex vs E.W.Gibbs)
7 • A.J.Tarrant (Rex vs G.Brider)
a7 • The Story of a Crime page 34.

strong. On 8.3.1922 "There were rumours spread by the strikers that Natives were attacking. I can's say if the rank and file believed these rumours."[1] From March 7 a rumour spread in Regents Park that the Natives were rising "and everyone turned out and this talk continued more or less until the tenth."[2] In Fordsburg on 9.3.1922 "There were still rumours of the Kaffir scare."[3]

There was no foundation in these rumours. Police chief A.E.Trigger gave evidence that he thoroughly investigated suggestions thrown out by strikers' bodies. "I found that there was no foundation whatever for them. The Natives behaved themselves admirably during the whole crisis."[4] Head Constable H.E.Mantell said of the Natives "Their conduct was most satisfactory,"[5] and so the reports continue.

Nevertheless many White strikers took the Native attack scare seriously. C.W.Lundin, a striker, gave evidence: "I took the Kaffir scare on the morning of 10.3.1922 to be genuine. At about 8.30 a.m. a man on a cycle came racing down Modder Road (Brakpan) and shouted that the Natives had broken in on the north-east side of Brakpan and were murdering women and children."[6] When the rebels captured Regents Park police station, the constable on duty was deprived of his rifle but handed back his revolver as protection"against the Natives."[7] In some areas the residents went into laager in churches and halls, believing that a Native rising was imminent.[a7]

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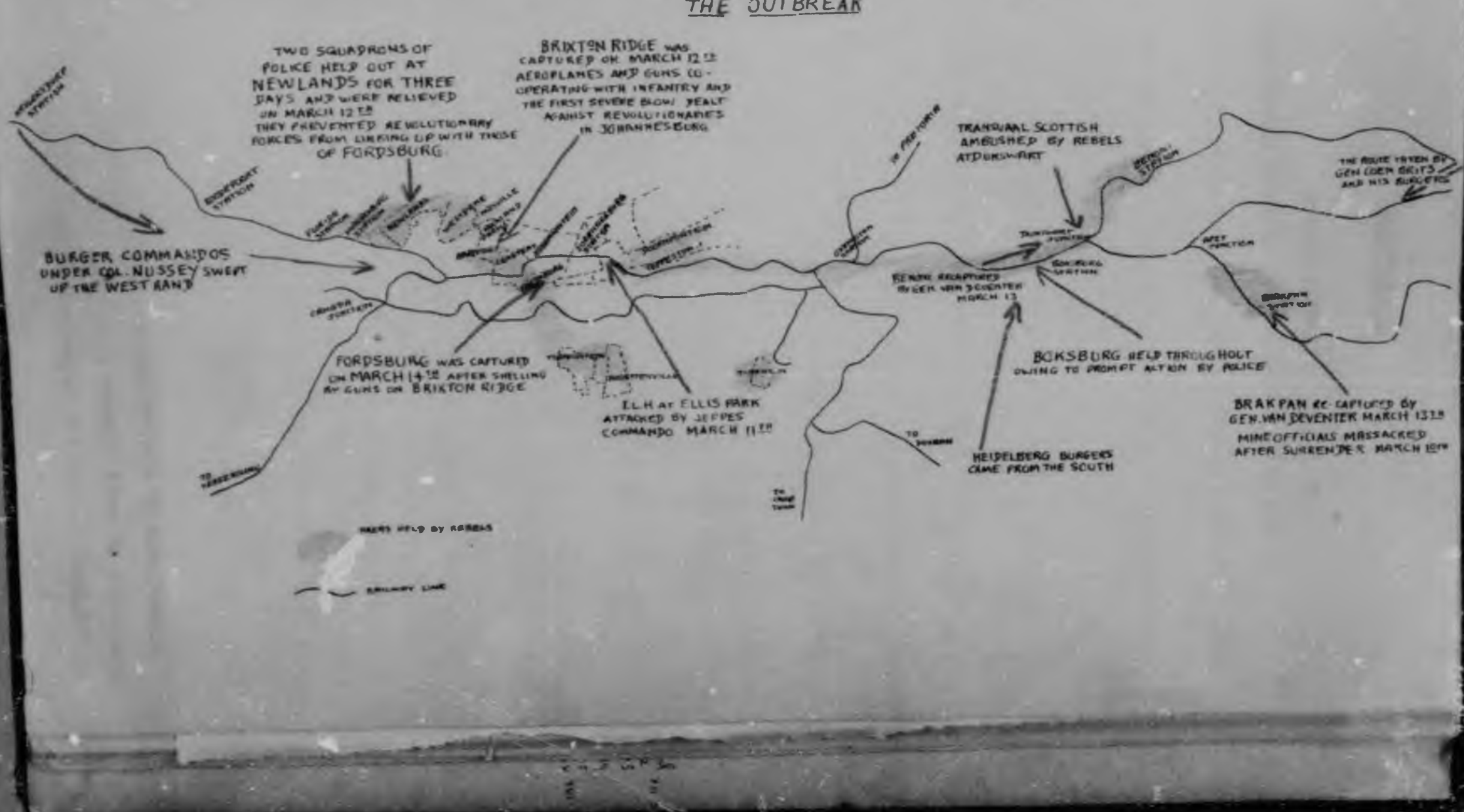
Vrededorp against the Natives and make prisoners of and disarm any police who interfere with us."[1] Benoni leader G.A.Carter used the same technique, telling a large meeting on 9.3.1922 "in a vague way about a Native rising ... they must stand together and protect their wives and children and even the wives and children of the police, but if they came in contact with the police, they would exchange blow for blow and shot for shot."[2]

Thus many men who perhaps would not otherwise have fought the government, were tricked into rebellion on 10.3.1922 by the rumours, unfounded and irresponsible, that the Natives were about to massacre the Whites.

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1. G.P.Ceronia (Rex vs A.A.Sandham)
2. Det.Head Cons.A.Baker (Rex vs G.A.Carter)

THE OUTBREAK



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