

a clear vision of where to go next.

Daniel Koza, who had called for action at the meeting in Rosenberg Arcade several days before, who had castigated the Executive of the Non-European Trades Council for their failure to act boldly, turned tail, afraid. He called for the strike committee to dissolve, and give up the fight. Gana Makabeni supported. The motion was lost, and the two left the Committee never to return. The Committee, now the rump of a strike committee, adjourned with no decisions taken.

(Sunday, August 18th)

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The Newtown Market Square is bare, deserted on a Sunday morning. A cold wind whipped across it. At 9.30 the first stragglers began arriving - a few African workers; a few ~~xxxxxx~~ newspaper reporters and photographers; two car-loads of plain-clothes detectives; a few car-loads of senior police officers. By ten o'clock, when the meeting was scheduled to start, a group of about thirty people stood in the centre of the square - workers and a few European and Indian Communists. The reporters and the detectives chatted in cars on the edge of the square. At the corner of Bree Street, a group of twenty miners, wrapped in coloured blankets, stood and waited, afraid to come closer in so forlorn a spot, with memories of police brutality fresh in their minds.

Some of the leaders, prepared to speak at the meeting, still had the courage to come; James Philips, released from gaol the day before; Josie Palmer, who had inspired all the work in the Western Areas, and had driven and cajoled everywhere throughout the week; David Bopape, Secretary of the Anti-Pass Committee, in from Benoni. But the ranks of the leaders were as thin on that morning as the ranks of the followers.

No meeting was held. Everyone present was told to go home, to spend the rest of the day preparing the people for the great stay-at-home on Monday. By 11 a.m. the square was as empty and as bleak as it always is, on a bleak August Sunday, with the wind whipping ~~xxxxxx~~ across it.

The confidence and spark of fire reached its lowest point that morning. Despite the glowing and confident reports coming in all day from the Townships, all those who had been at the meeting felt heavy, spent. For all practical purposes, the General Strike was over. The people had been cowed into submission; the strike committee could not be called together to decide what to do; the air was heavy with defeat. There was nothing more to do than to wait and see - wait for Monday to bring what it would.

From the "Sunday Express", August 18th:

Editorial: "The Strike was a Warning".

"Last week's strike...was a salutary reminder of the kind of trouble which South Africa may expect, if the present policy of drift in the matter of non-European labour continues....there is, of course, an inevitable legacy of bad blood.....

To the great majority of native workers, a strike just means an opportunity to go out and stone the nearest policeman. The native is at the mercy of agitators, who do nothing to educate him in the proper conduct of the strike weapon.....

Yet there is very little sign that anyone proposes to undertake the immense task of teaching the native worker the ~~elements~~ elements of trade union principles.

....As things stand at the moment, our police, if it can be called a policy - is to treat him rough and tell him nothing. This attitude will not prevent strikes; it will merely ensure that every strike that occurs is automatically a riot. Native industrial workers must eventually be trade unionists, whether Europeans like this prospect or not.....

Headline: "Lawrence Praises Police".

"The South African Police Force was complimented by the Minister of Justice, Mr. H.G. Lawrence, yesterday, for the way it acted during the strike of mine natives last week.

Mr. Lawrence said.... 'Not only have they succeeded in maintaining law and order with commendable discipline and restraint, but they are responsible for saving from potential danger thousands of citizens along the Reef Towns.

.....In preventing what might have developed into ugly situations, force was inevitable, and both natives and police were injured. But the fact that not a single native lost his life at the hands of the police, is the best possible commentary on the admirable restraint displayed.....

"Only 12 rounds of ammunition were fired by the police during the native strike disturbances on the Witwatersrand last week. Eight natives were wounded, but no deaths from the firing have been

reported.

It is unofficially estimated however, that about 900 natives were injured, few of them seriously, in baton charges and other clashes.

So far five deaths have been reported. Four strikers were trampled to death by their companions at Sub Nigel during a stampede, and one native ~~brekax~~ who jumped from a mine dump at Robinson Deep broke his neck and died.

....Reports that the police used excessive force in handling the strike were denied by Mr. J.M. Brink, Director of Native Labour. yesterday.

"It is regrettable that force had to be used, but after repeated attempts by Department of Labour inspectors to persuade the natives to return to work had failed, it became inevitable", he said. ..."Many of the natives are still bewildered about the outcome of the strike, and feel that they were led up the garden path by agitators, in their claim for 10/- a day."

Stock Exchange Report: Headline: "Prices Rally with End of Native Strike."

"....Price movements closely followed the strike news, with quotations rallying smartly in the latter part of the week....."

Illogically enough, non-producing Orange Free State issues were most affected by the strike news, although there is not a native miner within miles of their properties....."

From the "Sunday Times: August 18th:

Editorial: "A Timely Warning".

"The strike of native mineworkers has been broken - and also a few heads. Rand people...will join in the congratulations to the police on their firm action without losing sympathy for the victims of their efficiency. The natives who were struck down were technically violating the law, but they were the dupes of agitators who persuaded them to make impossible demands on the mines, and to strike and make threatening demonstrations when their pay was not increased to 10/- a day. Many of the natives would not have joined

joined the strikers if their more determined compatriots had not intimidated them.

....there are many factors that are not so reassuring. The first is that a few agitators were able to influence such a large number of native workers. In this country, where any attempt to incite the native is not only a crime but a most unpopular offence, it is astonishing that secret agitation could have such a widespread result. The authorities are now conducting a searching investigation into this agitation and the culpability of certain alleged agitators. They will also investigate the ramifications of the Communists, who were active before and during the strike.

....We have seen the serious consequences of immature and mischievous trade unionism. It should be a timely warning. The country may not yet be ready to adopt the liberal solution of full trade unionism for the native worker, but it is equally true that....we cannot afford to leave him to be exploited and misled. "

Stock Exchange Report: From London:

"...The mining market has been dominated by the strike position. ...London observers are inclined to regard the trouble as having been driven underground, but with a likelihood that it will raise its head again before long.....An impression therefore remains that the past week's troubles are merely a harbinger of the persistent trend towards higher wages demands by native workers.

By The Mining Editor:

....."The native strike has been quelled but it would strain the limits of optimism to suggest that any satisfactory final settlement has been achieved...."

From "Die Weekblad", Sunday August 18th(Translated from Afrikaans)

Editorial: AGITATORS:

.....There is not the slightest doubt that the case for striking was spread by agitators, and the natives were..... seriously misled....These people possibly realised the danger that threatens white South Africa when they learned of the

thousands of natives who were on the road to Johannesburg, and whose attack upon the city was only foiled by the timely intervention of the police.

"Die Weekblad" publishes a cartoon titled "Victims of Communist Agitation". It shows a score of African miners, some armed with ~~stixkx~~ sickles, some with hammers, in a hand to hand fight with the police. Two Europeans labelled 'Communist', one with long flowing hair like an artist, and the other with beard, side-whiskers and moustache, stand aside from the fight, shouting 'Attack!' (Storm!)

Sunday was heavy with the foreboding of the end.

Sunday nights on the City Hall steps are a Johannesburg institution. The Communist Party, week in and week out through the years, has kept up its meetings there in the dark. Week after week the crowd gathers there in the dim street lights around eight o'clock, three or four hundred in the bitter days of midwinter, one to two thousand in summer when an event of some importance has taken place. This is the place where the people of Johannesburg come after any big event at home or abroad, to hear what the Communists have to say.

There were there about two thousand strong on that Sunday night, waiting to hear the Communists' version of the great strike. Hilda Watts opened the meeting, and called on Michael Harmel to speak. As Harmel spoke about ~~mx~~ the miners and the conditions of their life, about the strike and the brutal assaults of the police, about the tobacco workers and about the general strike, a silence descended on the crowd. The gossiping died away, and only the boom of the loudspeaker went on in the silence. Harmel spoke of the dead, and called for the audience to stand in two minutes silence in their memory. Only the whispers and giggles of the policemen standing in groups around the crowd broke the dead silence.

Then he appealed for funds for the strikers, for the families of the victims of the police terror, for the workers victimised by the Chamber of Mines. Girls with hats went in and out amongst

the crowd, and the silver and the notes poured in.

Hilda Watts closed the meeting. In a fiery and rousing speech, she castigated 'the great fat policeman over there, bursting out of his uniform, who stood and grinned on his great fat face, whenever mention was made of the brutal assaults made by the police on defenceless strikers...." and"....the group of policemen and their officers behind me here, who are so depraved and devoid of any human decency, that they giggle like schoolgirls while decent people are standing in silence to the memory of those done to death at their hands, and the hands of their colleagues...."

When the collection was counted, there was over £75 in the hats. The usual collection on a Sunday evening is about £2. Johannesburg had not entirely lost its sense of decency, and its sympathy for the workers, despite the ravings of the press.

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