LABOUR UNIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SWAZI LABOUR MOVEMENT, 1939-2014

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2019

LABOUR UNIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SWAZI LABOUR MOVEMENT, 1939-2014

BY

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A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

in the

FACULTY OF ARTS,

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

at the

University of Zululand

November 2019

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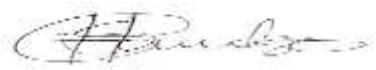
DECLARATION

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's policies and rules applicable to postgraduate research, and I certify that I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with their requirements. In particular, I confirm that I had obtained an ethical clearance certificate for my research and that I have complied with the conditions set out in that certificate.

I further certify that this thesis is original, and that the material has not been published elsewhere, or submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. I declare that this thesis is, except for the supervisory guidance received, the product of my own work and effort. I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with the University's Plagiarism Policy and acknowledged all sources of information in line with normal academic conventions. I have subjected the document to the University's text-matching and/or similarity-checking procedures.



Signed: _____

SIFISO SIPHO HLANDZE, Author

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Nel’siwe, and my children, Sihlelelwe, Andisiwe and Simisa, my parents, siblings and all my family and friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank God, the Almighty, who has kept and sustained me throughout my life and the production of this work.

I extend my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Professor Hamilton Sipho Simelane, for his competent handling and compassionate guidance of the writing process of this thesis. His specific valuable suggestions and probing questions gave direction to this work.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my co-supervisor and Head of Department at the University of Zululand, Dr Maxwell Shamase, for his role in the finalisation and submission of this thesis.

I am also indebted to all individuals who spared time for interviews (the list is endless). In particular, I am indebted to Dr Nhlanhla Dlamini for his support in carrying out this research. His words of encouragement kept me through and made it possible for me to complete the thesis. I gladly acknowledge and say thank you to the staff at the University of Swaziland Library and staff at the Swaziland National Archives.

Lastly, I am eternally grateful to my family: to Nel'siwe, my love, my best friend and my wife, my children, Sihlelelwe, Andisiwe and Simisa, my parents and siblings in their unwavering love, support and in their belief in my abilities to write and complete this thesis. I acknowledge their enduring forbearance at my frequent absences from home while carrying out field research. They have been my source of inspiration throughout and to them, I owe the greatest debt.

LABOUR UNIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SWAZI LABOUR MOVEMENT, 1939-2014

ABSTRACT

The study sets out to examine the development of Swazi labour movement from 1939 to 2014. Through a combination of desktop and qualitative research the study traces the trajectory of the Swazi labour movement from the colonial to the post-colonial period. The Swazi labour movement developed and evolved as a consequence of a number of socio-economic, political and legal factors. The capital penetration that occurred in Swaziland during and after World War II led to the conflict between labour and capital. The expansion of the Swazi economy, particularly the expansion of the workforce due to the growth in investment and production, the political developments of decolonisation struggles, the emergence of Pan-Africanism and the emergence of an authoritarian non-party Tinkhundla state led to the development of the Swazi labour movement in Swaziland. Whereas different scholars have analysed labour relations in Swaziland no study has been conducted to trace the development of the labour movement in the country. This study interrogates this neglected subject by focusing on the views and experiences of the workers to demonstrate that the Swazi labour movement in spite of the challenges it faced from employers and the state, championed the workers' demands and rights. It reveals social agency, showing that the Swazi labour movement was not passive victims of employers and the state but struck back to express its demands. Against the background of state repression, the study interrogates human agency to show that the Swazi labour movement continued to fight for improved conditions. The study shows that the labour movement played a critical role in the pro-democracy struggles in post-colonial Swaziland. However, in spite of the prominent role played by the labour movement in the struggle for democracy in Swaziland, the study shows the dynamics of labour by discussing the diverse views of the workers on the pro-democracy agenda which proves that Swazi labour was not monolithic. The study concludes by arguing that the Swazi labour movement has provided a constant source of discomfort for the non-party state as it represents an independent power base and holds an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in Swazi civil society.

Key words: labour movement, pro-democracy, state repression, *Tinkhundla*, post-colonial, trade unionism.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACC……..... African Consultative Committees

AFLI-CIO…… American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisations

AG…….. Attorney General

AGOA……. African Growth and Opportunity Act

ANC……..…….. African National Congress

ATUSWA…… Amalgamated Trade Unions of Swaziland

BTU……. Builders' Trade Union

CAS……..... Committee on the Application of Standards

CDC…… Colonial Development Cooperation

CMAC…… Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration Commission

COSATU…… Congress of South African Trade Unions

CRC ……..... Constitutional Review Commission

EI……. Education International

FSE-CC……... Federation of Swaziland Employers and Chamber of Commerce

GSP……..... Generalised System of Preferences

GNT…… Government Negotiating Team

ICU……. Industrial and Commercial Workers Union

ICT…….. Information Communication and Technology

ICFTU……. International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

IDASA…… Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa

ILO…….. International Labour Organisation

INM…… Imbokodvo National Movement

IRA……. Industrial Relations Act

ITUC……... International Trade Union Congress

LAB……. Labour Advisory Board

LCC……. Local Coordination Committee

MMD……..... Movement for Multiparty Democracy

NAPSAWU……. National Association of Public Servants and Allied Workers Union

NEC……. National Executive Committee

NNLC ……..... Ngwane National Liberatory Congress

NUNW…… National Union of Namibian Workers

OATUU…….. Organisation of African Trade Union Unity

OFC…… Overseas Food Cooperation

PM…….. Prime Minister

PUDEMO …….. People‟s United Democratic Movement

SADC ……. Southern African Development Community

SACP ……. South African Communist Party

SAPAWU…… Swaziland Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union

SATUCC……. Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Committee

SCARTA……..... Swaziland Commercial Amadoda Road Transportation

SCAWU……..... Swaziland Commercial and Allied Workers' Union

SDA …… Swaziland Democratic Alliance

SMAWU……. Swaziland Manufacturing and Allied Workers' Union

SDNU……. Swaziland Democratic Nurses' Union

SNA…… Swaziland Nurses Association

SNACS…… Swaziland National Association of Civil Servants

SNAT…….. Swaziland National Association of Teachers

SNC……. Swaziland National Council

SNPF…… Swaziland National Provident Fund

SNUS ……. Swaziland National Union of Students

SNUT…….. Swaziland National Union of Teachers

SFL …… Swaziland Federation of Labour

SDP……. Swaziland Democratic Party

SPP…….. Swaziland Progressive Party

SPRAWU…… Swaziland Processing and Refining Allied Workers' Union

SPTWU……... Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union

SFTU ……. Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions

STAWU…….. Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers' Union

SUFIAW……. Swaziland Union of Financial Institutions and Allied Workers

SUDF ……. Swaziland United Democratic Front

SSN …… Swaziland Solidarity Network

SWAYOCO …… Swaziland Youth Congress

SWADEPA …… Swaziland Democratic Party

SWACOTU…… Swaziland Congress of Trade Unions

SWAPO…….. South West African People's Organisation

TSC……. Teaching Service Commission

TUCOSWA …… Trade Union Congress of Swaziland

TRC …… Tinkhundla Review Commission

UNIP…… United National Independence Party

WFTU……. World Federation of Trade Unions

ZCTU…….. Zambia Congress of Trade Unions

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

African labour history has attracted the interest of many scholars, Swaziland is no exception. While scholars have written on labour history in Swaziland, none have written on the development of the Swazi labour movement. In this study, labour movement is conceptualized as collective organization of working people developed to represent and campaign for improved working and living conditions from their employers through the implementation of labour and employment law and their governments. The history of paid labour in Swaziland dates back to the colonial period when a few major industries in the colony were established.[1] The establishment of industries in Swaziland was facilitated by the changing British colonial policy which sought to improve the economic situation in the colonies from the time of the Second World War. This was begun through the British Colonial Development and Welfare Fund in 1940. In 1948 the British government attempted to stimulate economic development in the colonies through the Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) and Colonial Development Corporation (CDC).[2] Swaziland as a British colony was also affected by the changing British colonial policy in Africa as it provided the major impetus for economic change in the country.

From inception, procurement of labour was a challenge for Swazi major companies. These companies found it difficult to recruit Swazi labour and were immediately faced with a labour shortage. Two factors were responsible for this shortage of labour. First, during the late 1940s and early 1950s most Swazis had entered into wage labour. Thousands of Swazi men were employed in the South African mines. Even internally thousands of Swazi men, women and children were engaged in wage labour. This meant that local companies had to compete for Swazi labour. This Swazi labour began comparing the wages that were offered by the local companies and chose those that were paying better. Also, Swazi workers were aware of better

[1] Havelock Asbestos Mine was opened in 1939. The Ngwenya Iron Ore Mine was opened in 1946. Peak Timbers was established in 1947 while Usuthu Forests was established in 1948 and later became Usuthu Pulp. In 1957 Mhlume Sugar Company was opened and in 1958 Ubombo Ranches was established.

[2] H.S. Simelane, *Colonialism and Economic Change in Swaziland, 1940-1960* (Manzini: JAN Publishing Centre (PTY) Ltd, 2003), p. 9.

wages that were offered by the South African mines and did not hesitate to choose the South African mines ahead of local companies. Even among the local companies those that were able to retain labour were those companies that comparatively paid better than other local companies. This competition for labour led to shortage of labour among local companies.[3] Second, most Swazi workers were not yet fully proletarianised during this period. Thus they could easily withdraw their labour when conditions were unbearable, particularly during the ploughing season to engage in farming activities.[4] Most Swazis had no economic compulsion to enter into wage labour during this period and preferred remaining in their village where they enjoyed a degree of autonomy. This left local companies with a serious task of mobilizing a labour force and were subsequently faced with labour shortages. Also, the demanding nature of the unskilled work which was done by Swazi workers contributed to labour shortages among local companies. Swazi workers were quick to individually withdraw their labour when working conditions proved unbearable. Nearly all the Swazi workers during the 1950s were not used to the demands of wage labour. They found the work difficult while the reward was insufficient.[5] Again, this contributed to the labour shortage faced by local companies during the 1940s and 1950s. This labour shortage motivated the local companies to connive with the Swazi traditional ruling system to try to improve their recruitment efforts. Consequently, recruitment sites were built along with the appointment of Chief Recruiting Officers (*bogalajane*).[6] This attempt, however, was unsuccessful because local companies failed to recruit an adequate labour force. Eventually, more women and children were employed to solve the problem of labour shortage.[7]

The labour movement in Swaziland and all its predecessor forms of worker organization historically emerged as a consequence of a number of socio-economic, political and legal factors,

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[3] A.R. Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition for Swazi Labour, 1945-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Vol, 13, 1 (1986), p. 128.

[4] S.S. Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness in Swaziland: The Case of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1948-1963", MA Thesis, University of Swaziland, 2013, p. 34.

[5] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness in Swaziland…".

[6] Simelane, *Colonialism and Economic Change*, pp. 132-155; see also Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…, p. 36.

[7] H.S. Simelane, "The State and Child Labour in Colonial Swaziland, 1914-1947" *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Vol, 31, 3 (1998), p. 125.

all of which are dealt with in the study. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to trace the history of the Swazi labour movement, all its variant forms and periods, with a particular focus from the late 1930s to 2014. The labour movement in Swaziland has faced and continues to face a myriad of challenges that test its unity and sustainability. Although the labour movement in Swaziland has moved from one challenge to another, it has somehow survived and adapted in these challenges.

The first noticeable workers' activities were seen in 1939 and 1944 at the Havelock Asbestos Mine when Swazi and other African workers held unorganised strikes.[8] During the early 1950s worker consciousness in Swaziland manifested through early forms of labour withdrawal. Swazi workers individually withdrew their labour from the companies without giving notice to their employers after getting paid. From the mid-1950s to the early 1960s Swazi workers began to formally complain to imposed worker representatives,[9] albeit individually. Failure by the imposed worker representatives to satisfy workers in redressing their grievances led to the birth of trade unionism. Trade unionism in Swaziland coincided with the formation of political parties. Political parties were formed in getting ready for Swazi independence. During this period, two factions were calling for independence from Britain. On the one hand, there was the traditionalists comprising the Swazi National Council (SNC) and members of the royal family led by King Sobhuza II. On the other hand, there were political parties and trade unions. Each of these two factions felt it was the rightful one to attain independence on behalf of the Swazi nation. The political parties sought to draw support from the working class and defeat the Swazi traditional leadership and then govern the country.[10] Ultimately, in 1962 Swaziland witnessed the formation of trade unions and the first organized[11] major strike at Usuthu Pulp.[12] In early

[8] H.S. Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action in Swaziland: The Case of Havelock Mine, 1939-1944", *UNISWA Research Journal,* Vol. 16, (2002), pp. 5-18. Unorganised strikes is used here to mean that the strike was not organised by a trade union. During this period there were no trade unions in Swaziland and worker consciousness largely manifested itself through individual labour withdrawal.

[9] This was a structure that was imposed by local companies together with the Swazi monarchy to listen to and represent workers' interests and sort out their grievances of a petty nature. In reality worker representatives did not represent workers' interests but those of the employers and monarchy.

[10] See Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness in Swaziland…".

[11] Organised is used here to mean that the strike was orchestrated by a trade union.

1963 there were wildcat strikes across the country which developed into a national unrest forcing the colonial government to use the Gordon Highlanders from Kenya to end the strikes. Political parties' leaders such as Ambrose Zwane, Prince Dumisa Dlamini, Frank Groening, Macdonald Maseko and Princess Bethusile took advantage of the situation and influenced workers to demand wage increments.[13]

Organised unions began to come together in 1971. The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) was formed in 1971 and registered in 1973.[14] The work of the SFTU was seen in the labour militancy of the mid-1990s engaging in mass stay-aways and a series of general strikes trying to improve the welfare of the workers but also addressing national politics. More recently, union federation has taken a new direction with the formation of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) in 2012.[15] In March 2012, labour unions in the country united to form TUCOSWA, the biggest federation to date posing a great threat to employers and the one-party state that has characterised much of post-colonial Swaziland. The formation of the TUCOSWA was in line with Article 5 of Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to organise which Swaziland ratified in 1978. This article recognises the right of workers' organisations to establish or join federations and confederations of their own choice.[16] The TUCOSWA was formed following a move by affiliates of the defunct SFTU and SFL together with SNAT. [17]

The history of Swazi workers' struggles together with that of their organizations is important in modern day society. It has even more weight if such a history is written from the perspectives

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[12] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 45-103.

[13] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 45-103. See also P. Gosnell, *Big Bend: A History of the Swaziland Bushveld* (Durban: Peter J. Gosnell, 2001), pp. 223-226.

[14] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years of Unbroken Workers' Struggles in Swaziland, 1960-2012* (TUCOSWA, 2013), p. 32.

[15] See TUCOSWA Constitution, March, 2012.

[16] Observation (CEACR) – adopted 2012, published 102nd ILC Session (2013): Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[17] Despite being part of TUCOSWA the SNAT remained an autonomous union as the SFTU and SFL became defunct. See also, TOS, "SNAT is the only other major union left", 14 March, 2012.

and experiences of the workers themselves. This is particularly important because the labour movement in Swaziland has continually played a prominent role in the struggles of the oppressed and exploited workers and Swazi populace at large. However, in the absence of a documented history that bears testimony to the roles that the labour movement has played in Swaziland, there is great danger of this history being lost. The study is therefore an attempt to document the development of the Swazi labour movement from the view point of the workers against buckling pressure from both employers and the state.

The study seeks to investigate how the Swazi labour movement developed and changed over time from 1939 to 2014. The year 1939 is important to this study because that is when workers' activities were first witnessed in Swaziland.

Statement of the Research Problem

The industrialization that occurred in Africa particularly during and after World War II led to conflict between labour and capital. The expansion of the African economy, for instance, the expansion of the workforce due to the growth in investment and production, the political developments of anti-colonial struggles, the emergence of Pan-Africanism and the post-independence politics in Africa led to the development of labour movements in Africa. While an intensive study of the conflict between labour and capital has been conducted, there is a limitation in the case of the development of the Swazi labour movement. For instance, despite the attention that the labour movement has attracted in Southern Africa, the theme has not been sufficiently underscored in Swaziland. To date there is no study tracing the development of the labour movement in Swaziland from the beginning to the present times. Only fragmented studies have been done on worker consciousness and worker activities by scholars on the major industries of Swaziland. This study investigates the trajectory of the development of the Swazi labour movement from 1939 to 2014 and how it was shaped by both economic and political circumstances.

Aims and objectives

The study sets out to investigate how the Swazi labour movement developed and evolved over time. The specific research objectives of the study are to;

- explore how the development and evolution of worker consciousness in Swaziland led to the development of the labour movement;
- examine how political factors in Swaziland have contributed to the development of the Swazi labour movement;
- analyse how anti-colonial struggles in the Southern African region and beyond have impacted on the development of the Swazi labour movement;
- examine the relationship between the Swazi labour movement and the Swazi state and how this relationship has contributed to the development of the Swazi labour movement;
- assess the contribution of the Swazi labour movement towards the struggle for democracy in Swaziland.

Research Questions

(a) What were the socio-economic and political dynamics that led to the development of the labour movement in Swaziland?

(b) What was the nature of worker consciousness in Swaziland when it first manifested and how did it change over time?

(c) What role did politics play in shaping the labour movement from the 1960s to 2014?

(d) What role did the Swazi traditionalists and government play in shaping and moulding the labour movement?

(e) How have workers reacted to the political developments of the anti-colonial struggles in the Southern African region and beyond?

(f) What has been the relationship between labour and politics, and how has this relationship contributed to the development of the Swazi labour movement?

Significance of the Study

The research is the first academic study to trace the development of the Swazi labour movement. It is hoped that a thorough and well-investigated response to the study of the development of the Swazi labour movement will result into an original and substantial contribution to the labour history of Swaziland. The main value of this study is that it attempts to fill a very important historical gap in the study of the labour relations in the country. To date, no study tracing the development of the labour movement from 1939 to 2014 in the country has been conducted.

Thus, this study attempts to redress the imbalance that currently exists in the historiography of labour in Swaziland.

Research Methodology

The nature of the subject under investigation and the period covered determined that data be collected using a combination of qualitative and desktop research. According to A.S. des Vos et.al, the qualitative research methodology is important because it gives rich information.[18] The qualitative methodology helped the researcher to develop a full understanding of the information being investigated.[19] Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln argue that a qualitative research methodology is guided by processes which include field notes, oral interviews, photographs and recordings. In essence, the qualitative research method helped the researcher to study things in their own natural settings and interpret things in terms of the meanings people bring to them.[20] The qualitative research provided rich and informative data based on the experiences of former employees and trade unionists.

The major focus in collecting data for the research was capturing the experiences and perspectives of workers and trade unionists of the country. These experiences were captured through oral interviews. Interviews were carried out with respondents who were identified through purposive and snowball sampling, but the determining factors for being chosen as a respondent were being former workers and trade unionists. Oral data was collected through face-to-face, in-depth interviews to allow the interviewees considerable autonomy and flexibility in responding to questions raised by the study. As des Vos et.al argue, oral interviews are the predominant method of data collection in qualitative research.[21] Oral evidence helped the researcher to supplement his interpretation of written sources. Through oral evidence the researcher was able to reveal evidence which wast not obtained from any other source. Further,

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[18] See for instance, A.S. des Vos, H. Strydom, C.B. Fouche and C.S.L. Delport, *Research at Grassroots for the Social Sciences and Human Service Profession*, 3rd Edition (Pretoria: Van Schail Publishers, 2005), p.329.

[19] See for instance, E. Babbie and J. Mouton, *The Practice of Social Research, the South African Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 309.

[20] N.K. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Carlifornia: Sage Publication, 2005), 3rd Edition, p.3.

[21] des Vos, H.Strydom, Fouche and Delport, *Research at Grassroots*, p. 287.

oral interviews gave the researcher the autonomy to ask questions that may never have been asked before and also opened new areas of research.[22] The researcher was aware of the limitations of oral evidence and covered these weaknesses by supplementing and cross-checking oral evidence with other sources.

While interviewing his informants, the researcher used a digital voice recorder after which he transcribed the interviews.[23] The use of a digital voice recorder has the advantage of saving time and of preserving the entire interview for later analysis. In addition, the researcher used semi-structured interviews when the need arose. There were instances where the researcher was seeking specific information (gathered from other interviews) which needed to be confirmed. To do this, the same questions were asked during each interview.[24] While pursuing this interview method, the researcher made the interview to remain flexible to allow a degree of autonomy to the informants which enabled him to get as much information as he could. Similarly, des Vos et.al argue that this method gives both the researcher and informant more autonomy which helps give a detailed picture of the informant about a particular subject. In turn, this method allowed the researcher to follow up particular interesting emerging issues from the interview, and the informant time to give a detailed picture of events. This allowed the researcher to tackle complex and controversial or personal issues.[25] The researcher interviewed trade unionists (former and current) and former employees of the country's major industries. They helped to give a general view of the issues being investigated. Since all the researcher's respondents were their own gatekeepers there was no need for any special permission to interview them.

The researcher used purposive sampling as a sampling procedure where the researcher relied on his judgment on selecting the interviewees. E. Babbie describes purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher uses their discretion to select the most useful or

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[22] See for instance, W.H. McDowell, *Historical Research: A Guide* (London: Longman, 2002), pp. 59-60.

[23] For a similar view, see A. Bryan, *Social Research Method*, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 438.

[24] See also, C. Dawson, *Practical Research Methods* (Oxford: How to Books, 2002), p. 27.

[25] des Vos, H.Strydom, Fouche and Delport, *Research at Grassroots*, p. 296.

representative interviewees.[26] Informants were therefore selected based on their knowledge on the subject and this helped the researcher to answer the research questions coming from the study.

In addition, the study used desk-top research. The desk-top research, according to C. Dawson, comprises the examination of existing literature to help situate one's current study within the context of existing evidence. Also, desk based research involves collecting secondary information which the researcher will then use its findings as backing for their own work.[27] C. Wineberg adds by saying that the secondary information will be used to support the researcher's research opinions, to develop their research ideas, to solve research problems as well as disagree with other scholarly writings. This information was accessible in libraries, government departments and internet.[28]

Document analysis was another useful source of information for this study where upon documents and texts were analysed. As des Vos et.al argue, the use of document analysis allows for in-depth qualitative research.[29] The study used document analysis as a method of data collection analyzing documents, government annual reports, newspaper articles, and journal articles. In addition, official documents of both colonial and post-colonial governments such as *Swaziland Annual Reports* were used in reflecting on the development of the labour movement in the country.

As part of desk-top research documents were complemented with internet, on-line databases and libraries. Internet use was useful to the researcher because it improved the way in which he searched for information. Through internet use, the researcher was able to find information on any subject.[30] Its constant update means that archived and latest data was readily available for

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[26] E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research,* 12th Edition (Wadsworth: Cenage Learning, 2010), p. 193. See also des Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, *Research at Grassroots,* p. 202.

[27] Dawson, *Practical Research,* p. 41.

[28] See also, C. Wineberg, *Learning how to Research and Evaluate* (Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd, 1997), p. 78.

[29] des Vos, H.Strydom, Fouche and Delport, *Research at Grassroots,* p. 319.

[30] See also, Wineberg, *Learning how to Research,* p. 78.

the researcher. The internet became an importance source of information because it has websites on labour and trade union movements.

Access to libraries was another source needed to carry out this research. Despite the availability of information on the internet, a great deal of information is still found in hard copies in library shelves. The researcher used the University of Swaziland and University of Zululand Libraries. In addition, national libraries in Swaziland were used by the researcher. For the most part, reference books and journals found in libraries were of great help to the researcher.

There is also the specialist library at the Swaziland National Archives at Lobamba in Swaziland which offers government documents, archival files, newspaper reports, books and theses. Notably, government departments and individual companies commission a lot of research, and keep all the research reports at the Swaziland National Archives. Archival data was very important in this research.[31]

Structure and Focus of Chapters

The study is divided into nine chapters. **Chapter 1** is the general introduction. It introduces the context of the study. It also defines the research problem, showing how this study explores an area that has previously not been explored in the way that this study does. It also introduces the research, shows how it is going to fill a research gap and add knowledge to the historiography of Swazi labour studies. It also explains the objectives and clarifies the scope of the research. The chapter further presents the methodology of the research on which the thesis is based.

Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical framework and literature review. Marxisism, labour movement unionism and social movement unionism theory are used as a theoretical framework of the thesis. The literature review summarises previous research on worker consciousness which is reviewed alongside labour procurement, labour migration, trade unionism and the concept of labour movement and the issue of labour and politics or the state. The chapter then

[31] For more information on archives see C. Hamilton et.al (eds.), *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002); H.D. Nyirenda, "Archives Administration in Tanzania: Quo Vadis?", *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, Vol. 4, 2 (1994), pp. 107-116.

situates the current research to studies on labour movement in the Southern African region and beyond.

Chapter 3 examines how the capitalization of the Swazi colonial economy and the subsequent labour shortages that shook local companies between the 1940s and 1960s eventually led to the development of Swazi labour movement. The chapter argues that the advent of capitalism shaped the development, character and growth of the Swazi working class. The capital penetration which took place in Swaziland during and after the Second Wolrd War led to a very strong demand for local labour which in turn transformed the character of the working class and eventually led to the development of a Swazi labour movement. Also, the chapter examines how the shortage of labour for local companies between the 1940s and 1960s led to the development of a Swazi labour movement.

Chapter 4 examines how the development of worker consciousness between 1939 and 1954 contributed to the development of the Swazi labour movement. The chapter argues that worker consciousness was a precursor for the development of the Swazi labour movement. The chapter begins by analysing the 1939 and 1944 Swazi and African workers' strikes at the Havelock Asbestos Mine. It argues that these strikes were a manifestation of consciousness by the workers. Lastly, the chapter examines how worker consciousness manifested primarily through the early individual strategies of labour withdrawal. Consequently, the chapter divides worker consciousness into early individual and group strategies by workers from 1939 to 1954. Ultimately, worker consciousness led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Chapter 5 examines how traditional politics and the introduction of imposed workers' councils in the local companies developed consciousness among Swazi workers between 1955 and 1962. The chapter argues that the imposed workers' councils shaped consciousness among the workers as workers used these structures to challenge unfair and arbitrary dismissals, ill-treatment, poor working and living conditions and low wages. The chapter begins by defining workers' councils and then provides a historical background of the system of imposed worker representation in Swaziland. The chapter argues that this new form of consciousness ultimately led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Chapter 6 focuses on strikes and trade unionism in the early 1960s. The birth of trade unionism in the country is examined against the background of nationalist politics that swept Africa and Swaziland in the early 1960s. The chapter also explores the reasons why trade unionism only arrived in the 1960s while it came early in other parts of the Southern African region. The mushrooming of political parties in the early 1960s somehow triggered the formation of trade unions in the country. In 1962 Swaziland witnessed the first major strike under a trade union at the Usuthu Pulp Company. The 1962 strike was soon followed by a wave of national strikes in 1963. The strikes ended when the colonial government called upon the Gordon Highlanders used force after please from King Sobhuza II to end the strike fell on deaf ears of the workers.

Chapter 7 critically reflects on the Swazi labour movement's experiences and its responses to the challenges it faced from independence to 2008. The labour movement's responses are discussed against the background of post-independence politics, state policies and labour militancy. Firstly, the chapter examines the early post-colonial period to the 1980s that saw the emergence of a centralized one-party *Tinkhundla* state which tended to view the labour movement as a threat to its hegemony. Even though trade unions were repressed alongside political parties, this chapter argues that the labour movement struck back and continued to fight for workers' rights and improved working and living conditions and wages. Secondly, the chapter argues that as the cost of living became unbearable in the 1990s workers, through federations and trade unions, responded with militant protest actions. Finally, the chapter focuses on the labour movement's response to the workers' brutalisation and victimization through repressive laws, hostile government attitudes and state sponsored violence in post-colonial Swaziland. In the final analysis, the Swazi labour movement emerged as a significant opponent of the one-party state that has characterized much of post-colonial Swaziland. The labour movement was central to the widespread challenges to the authoritarian state in much of post-independence Swaziland.

Chapter 8 sets out to examine the relationship between labour and pro-democracy political groupings in post-colonial Swaziland. It focuses on the relationship of the labour movement with political parties and its contribution to the struggle for a democratic Swaziland. The chapter argues that Swazi labour has played a significant role of addressing wider societal political issues

to do with the repressive and undemocratic atmosphere of the traditional monarchic system and one-party state that has characterised much of post-colonial Swaziland. However, despite its relationship with political parties, the labour movement has sometimes fought to retain its autonomy although the extent to which this has been achieved is yet to be explored by scholars. In discussing the trajectory of the labour movement in post-colonial Swaziland the chapter analyses with notable peculiarities and similarities with cases in Southern Africa and elsewhere in the continent and the world, the role and contribution of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) and the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) and other labour unions to the contemporary struggles for democracy in post-colonial Swaziland.

Chapter 9 examines the state's reaction to the activities of the Swazi labour movement from 1939 to 2014. It argues that the Swazi state used a variety of repressive strategies as it responded to the activities of the labour movement. Despite the repression, victimization and brutality that Swazi workers suffered at the hands of the state the chapter argues that the Swazi labour movement did not lose it's identity, dignity and manhood. Instead, it continued to carry on the struggle of workers and adopted various strategies to insulate itself from the suffering it received from the state. In the final analysis the Swazi labour movement emerged as a resilient force that sought to champion the demands of the workers despite the state repression throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.

The general conclusion makes a reflection of the findings of the research. It discusses the central theme and makes a summary of the entire study. It also puts the research in context by making comments on significant issues in Swazi labour issues.

Limitations of the study

While carrying out this study, the researcher encountered few problems which he, however, overcame. In some cases, while informants agreed to be interviewed, they failed to honour appointments for interviews. Eventually, they did not participate in the study. Although the researcher was able to get the information from other participants and their quotes from newspaper articles it would have been very pleasant to get their perspectives and experiences on the issues that were interrogated. Notwistanding the effort made to capture the voice,

perspective and experiences of women the study also suffers from the problem of lack of adequate information on women due to the difficulty in retrieving their history because the Swazi labour movement is dominated by male workers.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical framework of the study. The study of history as scientific enquiry into the past, however, is not primarily concerned with theorizing but with how events actually unfolded.[32] The aim of the chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it explains the theoretical framework and justifies why certain approaches have been adopted as a framework for this study. It adopts several approaches in order to critically provide an understanding of the development of the Swazi labour movement. The chapter traces the development of the Swazi labour movement, all its variant forms and periods, with a particular focus from 1939 to 2014. This is achieved through utilizing the Marxist theory, labour movement unionism and social movement unionism theory which points out the trajectory of the development of the Swazi labour movement. The theoretical approaches employed in this chapter underpin the point that the labour movement in Swaziland and all its predecessor forms of worker organization historically emerged as a consequence of a number of socio-economic, political and legal factors, all of which the study attempts to deal with.

Secondly, this chapter also provides a survey of books, journal articles, and other sources relevant to labour and the labour movement theory. It provides a summary and a critical evaluation of these works in relation to the attempts by Swazi workers to insulate themselves from poor working and living conditions and low wages including unfriendly employer and state policies and practices. In this way, it is demonstrated how this research fits within the existing body of literature.

[32] See for instance, H. Sereo, "The Contribution of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) to Democratic Change in Swaziland, 1983-2013", PhD Thesis, University of Zululand, 2017, p. 17. For a detailed study on this topic see also, P. Chabal, *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling*, (London, Zed Books, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Guglielmo Meardi's[33] definition of labour movement, although sociological, is fundamental to the study because it informs the manner in which the labour movement in Swaziland might be conceptualised. Meardi defines a labour movement as "the collective action of workers within socialist relations of production, opposing them to management and the owners of the means of production. Such collective action has generally taken the form of labour unionism."[34] This definition, however, does not consider the fact that the labour movement has often gone beyond improving working and living conditions as well as wages to broader social and political conditions. Labour movement in this study refers to collective organization of workers developed to represent and campaign for better working conditions and treatment from their employers by the implementation of labour and employment laws as well as their governments. The standard unit of organisation is the trade union. In some countries, the labour movement includes a formal political wing, usually a political party known as a 'labour or workers' party'. Many individuals and political groups otherwise considered to represent ruling classes may be part of and active in the labour movement.[35] This study uses the labour movement theory to analyse the development of the Swazi labour movement. Several approaches have been incorporated into the framework of this study.

The thesis draws upon Marxist theoretical conception of capitalism. Marxism originates from the work of Karl Marx who designed an analysis of political economy. In understanding the nature of capitalism Marx explored the 19th century production. "Subsequent research has developed Marx's work into the theoretical tradition of Marxism, which seeks to explain working conditions by situating them within the capitalist mode of production and capitalist class-relations."[36] Yates defines capitalism as the buying and selling of workers' labour-power by capital, which tends to exploit it in the productive process. The relationship between capital

[33] G. Meardi, "Labour Movements and Labour Unions: Emergence, institutionalization, crisis and revitalization of a social movement" *Sociopedia.isa*, 2013, p. 1.

[34] Meardi, "Labour Movements and Labour Unions…", p. 1.

[35] See for instance, http://www.wikipedia.com, retrieved on 4 January 2018, 1600hrs.

[36] E. Yates, "Capital Accummulation and Young Workers: a Local Labour Market Study of Greater Manchester", PhD Thesis, Leicester University, 2018, p. 28.

and labour is the fundamental social relation in capitalism. It is characterised by conflict as labour is basically forced into selling its labour-power to capital in order to survive because it has been excluded from ownership of the means of production.[37] The Marxist theory puts more emphasis on class struggle as the driver of human society, originating from the conflict between capital as owners of production and labour as sellers of labour power.[38] The study goes beyond the analysis of labour based on the conflict between capital and labour by demonstrating the agency with which the Swazi labour movement shaped its destiny.

This thesis also frames itself against the theory of social movement. Adler and Webster[39] argue that labour studies in South Africa have successfully incorporated the 'social movement' theory to demonstrate the course taken by the labour movement. Their thesis is that both poor working and living conditions as well as low wages together with apartheid forced the labour movement in South Africa to fight for political and economic rights. Furthermore, the labour movement in South Africa "has been characterized by patterns of organisation suited to a movement fighting an authoritarian enemy: leadership devolved to local levels, a wide repertoire of mass protest tactics and strategies, and alliances with community and political groups."[40] Adler and Webster acknowledge that the social movement theory has been tried and tested in developing countries such as Brazil and the Philippines. They argue that the social movement unionism could make a meaningful contribution to the social movement theory beyond the issues of authoritarian industrializing capitalist countries. Adler and Webster have adopted a theory that "recognizes the central role of social movements in the origin, development, and outcome of the transition process" rather than just potential threats to the status quo. In developing countries the labour movement has always been an active participant in social change as well as its struggles with capital and the state. It has succeeded in combining long term radical goals of social transformation with activist strategies and tactics to achieve its goals without inciting strong state

[37] Yates, "Capital Accummulation…", p. 29.

[38] Yates, "Capital Accummulation…", p. 32.

[39] G. Adler and E. Webster, "Challenging Transition Theory: The Labour Movement, Radical Reform, and Transition to Democracy in South Africa", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 23, 1 (1995) but all content used in the thesis was uploaded by Edward Webster on 16 April 2015.

[40] Adler and Webster, "Challenging Transition Theory…", p. 89.

reaction. Despite its involvement in other organisations, the labour movement has maintained its social movement character, which has enabled it to contribute to the process of change.[41] The study has incorporated into its framework the social movement theory and argues that the Swazi labour movement developed and evolved out of poor working and living conditions as well as poor wages and also due to wider societal issues such as politics. Despite the obvious influence from political parties, the study argues, the Swazi labour movement retained its social movement character and autonomy.

The social movement theory also focuses on the development group identity and social consciousness as well as the processes of organisation. The purpose of trade unions goes beyond redressing poor working and living conditions and low wages to influence political change in a society. Group identity, conflict with capital and full understanding of what is at stake are the three principles which when combined, "provide the coherent class consciousness that explains the prominence of trade unions as the central social movement in industrial society."[42]

The approach of social historians in particular has been incorporated to trace the history of workers' activities in Swaziland from the perspectives and experiences of the workers themselves. Since worker consciousness is a precursor for the development of a labour movement the study also incorporates the approach of social historians in tracing the development and evolution of worker consciousness in Swaziland. Worker consciousness is the awareness by workers that they have certain interests (whether as individuals or groups) and are exploited by the employer. Upon realising that they are exploited by their employer workers then devise several strategies to insulate themselves from their exploitation. For a long time African worker consciousness has been the focus of various scholars. Early scholars have equated African worker consciousness to the emergence of worker associations such as trade unions. Radical/neo-marxists, on the other hand have demonstrated worker consciousness among African workers even before the emergence of trade unions. Social historians have shown that African worker consciousness manifested itself in many forms including the importation of traditional cultural values. The usefulness and relevance of the approaches of

[41] Adler and Webster, "Challenging Transition Theory…", pp. 89-90.

[42] Meardi, "Labour Movements and Labour Unions…", p. 3.

radical/neo-marxists[43] and social historians[44] cannot be overstated. This study argues that worker consciousness in the country developed and evolved through the strategies that were adopted and devised by the workers to insulate themselves from the exploitative, manipulative and coercive measures at the hands of a capitalist companies. Such an approach is premised on the notion that in spite of the exploitation that workers were exposed to they managed to respond through ways better understood by themselves.

Workers tend to respond to exploitation through withdrawal of labour. As a consequence, labour withdrawal is an expression of worker consciousness. The workers are aware of the importance of their labour to capital. Thus, when they are unhappy with working and living conditions and wages they withdraw their labour. Withdrawal of labour in Swaziland manifested itself in different forms and developed and changed over time. Labour withdrawal included early forms which were individual.[45] Early labour withdrawals can be divided into complete and partial withdrawals. To the companies and colonial officials, complete withdrawal of labour was understood as 'desertion' while partial withdrawal was construed as 'loafing'. Workers who had spent a short time together could not immediately share their experiences and grievances with each other. They thus acted individually to rescue themselves from exploitation. It has been argued that early withdrawal of labour was largely informed by the economic needs of workers who joined the companies to improve their economic position. When workers were paid meagre wages, they adopted certain strategies.[46] In a similar way the study demonstrates that Swazi workers who joined the companies for the first time without previous experience tended to express their dissatisfaction in early individual forms of labour withdrawal. Mostly, their only concern was to obtain high wages. The complete withdrawal of labour during the early periods was informed by the fact that workers were not fully proletarianised as they had one foot in the companies and another in their villages.

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[43] See for instance, Van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness…"; Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of…"

[44] See for instance, Harries, *Work, Culuture and Identity;* Penvenne, *African Workers* .

[45] See for instance, Van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness…"; Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of…"; Simelane, *Colonialism*.

[46] See for instance, F. Zapata, I. Bizberg and I. Roxborough, "Worker Consciousness and Union Orientation: The Case of Mexican Steel Workers," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 3, 1 (1984), p. 121.

It is argued in this study that worker consciousness develops as workers live together in compounds built by the companies to control its African labour and share their grievances.[47] The study adopts this approach in order to demonstrate that in Swaziland, as workers stayed longer at the companies and as the facilities (compounds, even though they were not meant to help them) developed to facilitate togetherness, workers strategized on how to end their exploitation. It is also argued that the worker representative system imposed by employers to pacify group solidarity among workers motivated them to embark on collective bargaining.[48] This study adopts this approach in order to show how workers in Swaziland used worker representatives when dealing with what they viewed as unfair treatment. These worker representatives were without a cause of their own since they were recruited by the companies, state and the monarchy to diffuse worker consciousness and frustrate worker aspirations. While these worker representatives claimed to represent workers, they did not have their interests at heart but those of the companies, state and the monarchy. Workers were influenced by the failure of the imposed worker representatives to address their grievances to organize for collective bargaining and it challenged them to consider effective means of articulating their demands and improving their conditions at the companies.[49]

The study also frames itself against the backdrop of group solidarity. The focus on group solidarity is based on the failure by the imposed worker representatives to address workers' problems. It is argued that workers who enter into wage labour with education and experience from previous employment tend to express their dissatisfaction in en masse labour withdrawal probably because of their experience to the work environment. This group of workers tends to lead in challenging management for high wages and challenge unequal promotion opportunities to defend their interests as workers.[50] Worker consciousness among such workers was informed by the fact the workers were becoming semi-proletarianised.[51] They had become more

[47] See for instance, Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 177.

[48] See for instance, Simelane, "The State and the Working Class…", pp. 108-112.

[49] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…".

[50] See for instance, Zapata, Bizberg and Roxborough, "Worker Consciousness and Union Orientation…", p. 21.

[51] See for instance, Sticher, "The Formation…", p. 22.

dependent on wage labour. Usually, it is this group of workers which tend to move beyond improving working and living conditions to wider societal issues, particularly politics.[52] In Swaziland, en masse withdrawal of labour involved collective bargaining, group solidarity, protest songs, the formation of trade unions as well as petitioning the companies with demands and engaging in strike action.

Literature Review

The African worker has attracted a lot of scholarly interest in recent years.[53] As a consequence, there is abundant literature by different scholars on themes relating to African labour at a local, regional and international level. This is because the subject of labour is universal in nature, notwithstanding the fact that the local context is paramount. This section reviews the available literature on African workers by works of authors.[54] This literature informs the study of the manner in which the labour movement might be conceptualized in Swaziland. The themes that have been chosen for this review are labour procurement and labour migration, worker consciousness, proletarianisation, trade unionism and labour movement.

Bill Freund's review of the literature on African labour history provides a basic understanding on the study of the African labour movement. He gives the historiography of African labour from a thematic and chronological point of view. He argues that while there has been a lot of literature on African labour in recent years most of this literature has sometimes deviated from labour issues. Moreover, most of this literature is unrelated to African conditions because it has not been produced by African scholars.[55] Freund's study informs the study's understanding and conceptualization of the development of the Swazi labour movement.

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[52] See for instance, Burchielli, "The Purpose of Trade Union Values…", p. 137.

[53] B. Freund, "Labo[u]r and Labo[u]r History in Africa: A Review of the Literature", *African Studies Review,* Vol. 27, 2(1984), p. 1.

[54] There are several ways of organizing literature review. For a further study see for instance, V. Gasa, P. Mafora, and M. Maphalala, "The Literature Review", in C. Okeke, and M. van Wyk, (Eds.), *Educational Research: An African Approach,* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[55] Freund, "Labo[u]r and Labo[u]r History in Africa…",pp. 1-58.

Worker consciousness

The study argues that worker consciousness was a precursor to the development of the labour movement in Swaziland. Since there cannot be a labour movement without worker consciousness, worker consciousness is reviewed alongside labour procurement, labour migration, the concept of labour movement and the issue of labour and politics or the state. The study of African worker consciousness as a field of scientific enquiry and research originates in the work of a few scholars during the first half of the 20th century in Southern Africa. Such scholars include historians like L.H. Gann and J.R. Hooker.[56] These scholars not only denied worker consciousness among African workers but also that African workers were a working class. Their argument was informed by the fact that African workers were not fully proletarianised as they were still attached to their land. They had one foot in wage employment and another in the rural setting where their families lived. This argument was based on the experiences of the European worker who, unlike the African worker, was fully proletarianised and largely dependent on wage labour. In addition, trade unionism came earlier in Europe than in Africa. African workers did not form worker associations until at least the 1920s when trade unions emerged in Southern Africa. As a consequence, in the works of these scholars, the African worker emerges as a disorganized, exploited, passive being without a voice. This study argues, however, that Swazi workers were conscious of their status as workers and demonstrated consciousness in variety of strategies despite the absence of trade unions. Moreover, the study argues that worker consciousness was a precursor to the development of the labour movement in Swaziland.

In the 1970s, the view that African workers were devoid of worker consciousness since they did not create worker organizations was challenged by a new group of scholars. This group of scholars includes scholars such as C. Van Onselen, I. Phimister and C. Perrings.[57] These

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[56] L.H. Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969); J.R. Hooker, "The African Worker in Southern Rhodesia: Black Aspiration in a White Economy", *Race*, 6 (1964).

[57] See C. Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness in Black Miners: Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1920", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, 2, (1973), pp. 237-255; C. Van Onselen, *Chibaro: An African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1920* (London: Pluto Press, 1978); I.R. Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of African Worker Consciousness in Rhodesia" in: E. Webster (ed.), *Essays in Southern African Labour History* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978); C. Perrings, *Black Miners in Central Africa: Industrial Strategies and the Evolution of an African Proletariat in the Copperbelt, 1911-1941* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

scholars demonstrate worker consciousness among African workers long before the emergence of trade unions in the 1920s. They argue that Africans expressed their consciousness through a variety of strategies and methods including desertion, loafing, absenteeism, malingering, making critical assessments of wages and working conditions in the different parts of the labour market as well as the importation and use of traditional beliefs into the wage employment centre.[58] The study argues that worker consciousness among Swazi workers forms a background to the study of the labour movement in Swaziland. However, in dealing with the subject of worker consciousness in Swaziland there will be a point of departure from the underdevelopment approach. The study seeks to capture the voices and experiences of Swazi workers through interviewing ex-workers, recording and analyzing work and protest songs.[59] Further, while these scholars convincingly demonstrate worker consciousness among African workers they all put emphasis on conflict between labour and capital.[60] This study builds on the works of these scholars and aims at presenting Swazi worker consciousness from the workers' perspectives by examining closely their work experiences, survival strategies and protest songs.

E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*[61] is an important reference point for scholars dealing with worker consciousness. Thompson concentrates on English artisan and working class society in its formative years between 1780 and 1832. He argues that worker consciousness among English workers was caused by the growth and expansion of capitalism. This working class, according to Thompson, was structurally disparate, but through its own struggles forged a common consciousness. They achieved a conscious unity in pursuit of economic and political interests. In Thompson's work the workers are depicted as creating their own history in spite of the exploitative and manipulative tendencies of capitalism. This approach is useful to the study because it also seeks to depict workers as being able to create their own history in spite of the exploitation they received from their employers.

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[58] Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness in Black Miners…", Van Onselen, *Chibaro,* Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of African Worker Consciousness in Rhodesia…",Perrings, *Black Miners in Central Africa.*

[59] L.Vail and L.White, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville:University Press of Virginia, 1991).

[60] C. Perrings, a review of F. Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold,* F. Wilson, *Labour* and C.Van Onselen, *Chibaro,* in: *Journal of African History,* Vol. 18, 1, (1977), pp. 134-135.

[61] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1980), Revised Edition.

African labour studies have also attracted the attention of labour historians. Through the careful use of archival sources, workers' songs, poems and dances, and by including women, children and domestic workers in their studies these scholars brought a new dimension to labour studies. These scholars argue that in spite of the challenges they faced African workers devised ways to overcome the challenges and never lost their manhood, culture and identity.[62] The study benefits from the insights of these scholars by putting the African worker at the centre of the discussion through careful use of oral evidence as well as other types of sources in order to produce a balanced study. Similarly, this study incorporates songs and poems as well as women and children. The works of labour historians serve as useful models for the inquiry into Swazi worker consciousness in the country as a precursor for the Swazi labour movement during the period between 1939 and 2014.

Labour history has also captured the interest of Swazi scholars. Such scholars include Hamilton S. Simelane, who has written extensively on Swazi labour. Influenced by the underdevelopment paradigm, Simelane demonstrates worker consciousness among Swazi workers both in the absence and presence of worker associations. He argues that labour recruitment strategies, poor working and living conditions, low wages and the growth and expansion of employment opportunities were at the root of worker consciousness among Swazi workers. According to Simelane, Swazi worker consciousness manifested itself in different forms, such as early forms of labour withdrawal and the withdrawal of labour en masse.[63] Simelane also does well to discuss the formation of a working class in Swaziland, at national level.[64]

In another piece of work Simelane argues that the Usuthu Pulp Strike of 1962 was a result of conflict between labour and capital. To Simelane, the strike was a demonstration of the start of

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[62] Cooper, *Decolonization* ; J.M. Penvenne, *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenco Marques, 1877-1962* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994); P. Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity*; D.T. Moodie with Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines and Migration* (Witwatersrand: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001); S. Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African Response, 1895-1975* (London: Longman, 1982); P Alexander, "Paternalised Migrants, Policing and Political Economy: Highveld Colliery Strikes, 1925-49", *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 29, 1, 2003; K.E. Atkins, *The Moon's Dead! Give Us Our Money! The Cultural Origins of an African Work Ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843-1900* (London: James Currey, 1993).

[63] Simelane, *Colonialism*, pp. 155-175.

[64] Simelane, *Colonialism*, pp. 155-175.

effective organisation of Swazi workers.[65] At another level, the strike demonstrates the development of worker consciousness among the workers from predominantly individual strategies to largely group solidarity. Similarly, Martin Fransman puts emphasis on the conflict between labour and capital when examining the 1962 Usuthu Pulp strike.[66] This study aims to go beyond these analyses and includes the workers' voice which is missing in these studies.

Hlanze's study[67] on the evolution of worker consciousness at the Usuthu Pulp Company between 1948 and 1963 argues that Swazi workers demonstrated their consciousness through a variety of strategies which were changing over time. Influenced by social historians, Hlanze attempts to trace the history of Swazi workers' struggles and activities from the perspectives and viewpoints of the workers themselves. In the final analysis he depicts the workers as creators of their own destiny however the conditions that they were exposed to.

Proletarianisation

Writing on the process of proletarianisation in Swaziland, Bongani J. Nsibandze argues that the transition from peasantry to wage labour contributed to labour consciousness.[68] Similarly, H.S. Simelane analysed the process of proletarianisation in the country during the post-1945 period. Simelane's study is a departure from Nsibandze's study because Simelane focuses on the way in which capital penetration inside Swaziland shaped the development and growth of a working class.[69] Even though this study is not about proletarianisation, it acknowledges the importance of reviewing studies on this topic because proletarianisation informed worker consciousness and the labour movement at large.

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[65] Simelane, "Capital Penetration …", p. 155.

[66] M.J. Fransman, "The State and Development in Swaziland, 1960-1977", PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 1978, pp. 200-203.

[67] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…"

[68] B.J. Nsibandze, "Historical Perspectives on the Proletarianisation Process in Swaziland" in: N. Simelane (ed.), *Social Transformation: The Swaziland Case* (Codestria: Codestria Book Series, 1995), pp. 1-6.
[69] H.S. Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development of a Working Class, 1947-62"in: N. Simelane (ed.), *Social Transformation: The Swaziland Case* (Codestria: Codestria Book Series, 1995), pp. 38-40.

Labour migration

The study of labour migration is very important when studying the development of the Swazi labour movement. Labour migration in Southern Africa involved the movement of males to work in the South African mines and plantations.[70] Swazi migrants were late comers to the labour migration trend. It was not until the late 1890s that Swaziland joined the wagon of labour migration.[71] At the turn of the 20th century the number of Swazi migrants began to increase.[72] Alan Booth argues that Swazi workers took advantage of the competition for their labour between local companies and South African mines in the 1950s by choosing the South African mines because they offered better wages than local companies.[73] The study benefits from these studies on labour migration. It seeks to demonstrate that labour migration contributed to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

In a similar vein, Miranda Miles, using a life history approach, traces the history of Swazi female migrants to the Witwatersrand mines between 1920 and 1970. By letting her informants speak themselves Miles lets us to understand the experiences and perspectives of these women from their mouths.[74] This approach benefits the study because it also seeks to present the history of the Swazi labour movement from the perspectives of the workers. Also, the study seeks to include women history in the development of the labour movement in Swaziland.

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[70] F. Wilson, *Labour in the South African Gold Mines, 1911 – 1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 23.

[71] J. Crush, *The Struggle for Swazi Labour, 1890 – 1920* (Kingston: Queen's University Press, 1983), p. 14.

[72] A.R. Booth, "The Development of the Swazi Labour Market, 1900-1968)", *Southern African Bulletin,* Vol. 7 (1982),
pp. 34-37.

[73] A. Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition for Swazi Labour, 1945-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Vol. 13, 1(1986). For a similar view, see also N.G. Simelane, "A Historical Discussion of Migrant Labour in Swaziland", in: N.G. Simelane (ed.), *Social Transformation: The Swaziland Case* (Codestria: Codestria Book Series, 1995), pp. 15-35.

[74] M. Miles, "Missing Women: A Study of Swazi Female Migration to the Witwatersrand, 1920-1970", MA Thesis, University of Kingston, Ontario, Canada, 1991.

The role of the Swazi traditionalists

The role of the Swazi traditionalists is an important theme in this research. As a consequence, J.S.M. Matsebula's [75] and Nomthetho G. Simelane's [76] studies on worker representatives stand out. For instance, Matsebula argues that *Ndabazabantu* (worker representatives) and *Lisolenkhosi* (king's eye) were appointed by the king to represent workers on issues of a petty nature not wage increments.[77] Nomthetho Simelane argues that the system of imposed worker representatives prevalent in Swazi industries and companies led to the emergence of trade unions as workers sought to have fair representation of their interests through collective bargaining.[78] In addition, Hlanze's study demonstrates that Swazi workers rejected the system of worker representatives because they felt it was unfair to them since the representatives sided with management on most issues.[79]

Hugh Macmillan argues that King Sobhuza II revived the Swazi custom of worker representatives in colonial Swaziland in order to have control over the working class.[80] By imposing these traditional structures as worker representatives, Sobhuza sought to exert control over the working class.[81] Jonathan Crush argues that Sobhuza had earlier used the same system at the Havelock Asbestos mine.[82] King Sobhuza II, therefore, used culture in the country's

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[75] J.S.M. Matsebula, *The King's Eye* (Cape Town: Longman, 1983).

[76] N.G.Simelane, "The State and the Working Class: The Case of Swaziland", *Paper Prepared for the Conference on Southern African Studies 'Retrospect and Prospect', at the Centre of African Studies,* University of Edinburgh, 30 May-1 June, 1983, pp. 108-112.

[77] Matsebula, *The King's Eye*.

[78] Simelane, "The State and the Working Class...". For a similar view, see also, T.M. Debly, "Culture and Resistance: Swaziland 1960-2011", MA Thesis: University of New Brunswick, 2011; X. Simelane, "The Making of the Swazi Working Class: Challenges to the emergence of a countermovement in Swaziland", MA Thesis: University of the Witwatersrand, 2007; I. Winter, "The Post-Colonial State and the Forces and Relations of Production: Swaziland" *Review of African Political Economy,* Vol. 9 (1977), p. 38.

[79] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness….", pp. 58-73.

[80] H. Macmillan, "Anthropologists and 'Traditionalists' in Colonial Swaziland: The Case of the 'Emabhaca' Fines" *Journal of the International African Institute,* Vol. 65, 4 (1995), p. 555.

[81] See Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness….", pp. 58-73.

[82] J. Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority: Drinking at Havelock, 1938-1944" in: J. Crush and C. Ambler (eds.), *Liquor and Labour in Southern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), p. 380.

industries in an ideological and traditional power politics perspective to maintain loyalty from the working class.

Recently, Hamilton Simelane provides a historical analysis of the capitalization of the Swazi economy and its impact on the monarchy and general Swazi populace. In his analysis, Simelane argues that the capitalization of the Swazi monarchy was "at the expense of the majority of the citizens."[83] The impact of this capitalization has been the loss of traditional values of the monarchy that were evident before the advent of colonialism. Further, the capitalization of the Swazi monarchy has largely contributed to the economic inequalities that currently exist in Swazi society and lack of meaningful economic development in the country. Simelane's study is very important to this study because it explains why the Swazi monarchy has tended to connive with foreign capital much to the disgruntlement of the workers. Due to the monarchy's venture into business, albeit in the name of the Swazi nation, anti-trade unionism developed on the part of the monarchy. Thus, worker representatives were imposed in the country's companies to replace trade unions while not protecting the interests and grievances of the workers but those of the monarchy and employers. Eventually, there was sometimes conflict between Swazi labour and the monarchy because the workers fought for improved working and living conditions as well as high wages and mostly defied orders from the monarchy to return to work during strikes.[84] This study seeks to demonstrate that the capitalization of the monarchy contributed towards the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Racial discrimination and labour protests

Justice S. Mamba writes on racial discrimination at Havelock Mine during the period between 1936 and 1963.[85] Similarly, Nhlanhla Dlamini argues that racial discrimination and segregated working and living conditions led to the development of worker consciousness amongst Swazi workers at Havelock Mine between 1945 and 1973. Consequently, he views the workers' strikes

[83] H.S. Simelane, "The colonial experience, indigenous leaders and the capitalization of the Swazi monarchy" *New Contree*, 72, 2015, pp. 21-42.

[84] See for instance, Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action in Swaziland…".
[85] J.S. Mamba, "A Social History of a Swazi Labour Market: The Case of Havelock Asbestos Mine, 1936-1963", BA Project, University of Swaziland, 1993.

at the Havelock Mine as a challenge to the racial tendencies and policies of the company.[86] Informed by Charles Perrings' study [87] on the Zambian copper belt Dlamini goes on to describe race relations in Northern Rhodesia and argues that racial discrimination and segregation were at the root of African workers' labour protests in the copper belt in the 1930s and 1940s.[88] The study benefits from the above insights and takes a similar approach by adding a racial dimension in the evolution of worker consciousness at the country's industries. Like Dlamini's study, this study also analyses protest songs and seeks to argue that it is an expression of worker consciousness.

In colonial French West Africa and southern Africa, other scholars have demonstrated that African labour protests had a racial dimension. According to these scholars, through labour strikes African workers were challenging racial discrimination which elevated Europeans to supervisory positions while putting Africans in subordinate positions.[89] This study builds on these studies and seeks to demonstrate that labour protests in the country had a racial dimension.

Songs and poems

Vail and White deal with songs and poems in Swaziland.[90] Vail and White analyse Swazi royal praises and make meaning out of these.[91] Teresa Debly argues that pro-democracy groups used creative culture and tradition to challenge the legitimacy of the *Tinkhundla* system. Debly shows how political protestors have used songs and music in a cultural and traditional manner in order

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[86] N. Dlamini, "Race Relations in Swaziland: The Case of the Havelock Asbestos Mine, 1939-1964", MA Thesis, University of Swaziland, 2001, pp. 40-45; N. Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition of Racial Discrimination and its Aftermath: The Case of Swaziland, 1945-1973", PhD Thesis, the University of the Witwatersrand, 2007, pp. 346-362.

[87] C. Perrings, "Consciousness, Conflict and Proletarianisation: An Assessment of the 1935 Mine Workers' Strike on the Northern Rhodesian Copper belt", *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Vol. 4, 1 (1977), pp. 31-51.

[88] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 331.

[89] See J. Suret-Canale, "The French West African Railway Workers' Strike, 1947-8", in: R. Cohen, J. Copans and P. Gutkind (eds.), *African Labour History* (London: Sage Publication, 1978), pp. 129-132; I. Henderson, "Early African Leadership: The Copperbelt Disturbances of 1935 and 1945", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 2, 1 (1975).

[90] L. Vail and L. White, *Power and Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), pp. 156-197.

[91] Vail and White, *Power and Praise Poem, pp.* 156-197.

to keep the struggle for political reform in the country alive.[92] The study takes a similar approach by incorporating workers' songs into its analysis. Such an approach is useful since the study seeks to present the history of the Swazi labour movement from the perspectives and viewpoints of the workers themselves. It is hoped also, that such an approach will give Swazi workers agency.

Labour and politics

Robert Rotberg, taking a different approach from the above scholars, argues that African labour protests during the colonial period were synonymous to African nationalism.[93] Helen Bradford's study demonstrates that the role of a trade union goes beyond working and living conditions to national issues. Bradford shows that some workers also had aspirations about the political dispensation of their country. In the case of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), for example, the union promised economic and social conditions for black workers. In addition, the ICU became a political forum for Africans.[94] In Swaziland trade unions also played a dual role of improving working and living conditions as well as wider societal political issues. Similarly, Frederick Cooper argues that labour protests in colonial West Africa were influenced by decolonization politics.[95] Peter Alexander also argues that there was a relationship between labour and politics in the South African strikes during the Second World War.[96] This study builds on these studies and seeks to demonstrate that labour protests in the country had both racial and political dimensions.

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[92] T. Debly, "Culture and resistance in Swaziland", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 32, 3 (2014).

[93] R. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia 1873-1964* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 161-172.

[94] See Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom.*

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

[96] P. Alexander, *Workers, War and the Origins of Apartheid: Labour and Politics in South Africa 1939-1948* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), p. 4; see also L. van der Walt, a review of P. Alexander, *Workers, War*, in: *Journal of African History*, Vol. 44, 1, (2003), pp. 168-169.

Cliff Brown, using the neo-marxist perspective of divide-and-rule, argues that sometimes employers cause conflicts between workers.[97] While Brown's analysis uses racial antagonism as the employer's divisive strategy among American workers, Hlanze's study argues that Usuthu Pulp used promotions and dismissals to divide workers and to weaken their collective action.[98] The study seeks to demonstrate that employers and the Swazi state used many divisive strategies to pacify the labour movement.

Helen Bradford, writing on the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), credits the role of individual leaders such as Clements Kadalie in influencing consciousness among South African workers in the 1920s.[99] In a similar vein, Bonner, Hyslop and van der Walt advocate for a trans-national labour history approach. They argue that individuals are responsible for conscientising other workers because they transport worker consciousness from some regions to other regions.[100] Elsewhere in East Africa, George Gona also traces the life and times of an African trade unionist in Kenya.[101] The study finds this approach useful since it also demonstrates that the development of the labour movement in the country was partly due to the transportation of trade union ideas by South African nationals who came to work for the country's industries when they were established.[102] The study also sets out to examine the relationship between labour and politics in Swaziland and how this relationship has shaped and moulded the development of the Swazi labour movement.

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[97] C. Brown, "The Role of Employers in Split Labor Markets: An Event-Structure Analysis of Racial Conflict and AFL Organizing, 1917-1919", *Social Forces*, Vol. 79, 2 (2000), pp. 653-674.

[98] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness….", pp. 58-73.

[99] H. Bradford, "Lynch Law and Labourers: The ICU in Umvoti, 1927-1928" *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 11, 1 (1984), p. 136. For a similar view, see also Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom.*

[100] P. Bonner, J. Hyslop and L. van der Walt, "Rethinking Worlds of Labour: Southern African History in International Context", *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 66, 2-3, (2007), pp. 144-159; L. van der Walt, "The First Globalisation and Transnational Labour Activism in Southern Africa: White Labourism, the IWW and the ICU,1904-1934, *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 66, 2-3, (2007), pp. 242-244.

[101] G. Gona, "The Life and Times of an African Trade Unionist", Catholic University in Eastern Africa, 2002.
[102] See Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 80-81.

African labour has also played a crucial role in leading pro-democracy movements across Africa.[103] African labour movements have effectively played different, non-uniform roles. In some instances, African labour has played a subordinate role to the national liberation movement in the post-colonial period, often reduced to performing a 'conveyor belt' function of the ruling party.[104] In many other instances, African labour has provided a constant source of discomfort for incumbent regimes as they represent an independent power base and hold an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in African civil society. Labour movements were responsible for spearheading the formation of opposition parties which eventually dethroned the incumbent regimes.[105]

In the same vein, Lucio Baccaro [106] argues that in most countries, it has always been understood that the role of trade unions go beyond bread and butter issues to wider national political issues. This has been largely due to the fact that "labor movements aggregate and represent the interests of large numbers of working men and women, and thus play an important role in democratic politics, where each vote is counted equally, independent of economic power."[107] By strengthening their role as political intermediaries, unions seek to obtain the support and influence they need to survive. Even movements without a tradition of 'political unionism' are becoming more proactive political subjects, particularly by reconstituting the union as a key factor in local grass-roots politics. The ways in which unions go about developing expanded political strategies also influence, and are closely linked to, their actions. This study, using a chronological approach of the main events of workers' activities, sets out to examine the relationship between labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland. It argues

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[103] A. Beresford and H. Cross (Eds.), "The Politics of Globalised Labour in Africa", *Journal of Critical African Studies*, Vol. 7, 1(2015), p. 1.

[104] See for instance, J. Herbert, "Serving Workers or Serving the Party? Trade Unions and Politics in Namibia" In: B. Beckman, S. Buhlungu, and L. Sachikonye (eds.),*Trade Unions and Party Politics: Labour Movements in Africa*(Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), pp. 167-190; B. Raftopoulos and L. Sachikonye, *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980-2000* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2001).

[105] See for instance, M. Larmer, "The Hour Has Come at the Pit': Mineworkers' Union of Zambia and the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, 1982-1991", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, 2 (2006), pp. 293-312.

[106] L. Baccaro et.al, "The Politics of the Labor Movement Revitalization: The Need for a Revitalized Perspective" *Cornel University ILR School*, 2003, pp. 119-133.

[107] Baccaro et.al, "The Politics of the Labor Movement…"

that Swazi labour has and continues to play a dual role of addressing poor working and living conditions and low wages as well as addressing wider societal political issues to do with the repressive and undemocratic atmosphere of the traditional monarchic system and one-party state that has characterised much of post-colonial Swaziland.

Trade unionism and labour movements

Charles Orr traces the development of trade unionism in colonial Africa. He argues that the tendency for African workers to organize themselves began before World War I in British colonial West Africa. However, it was only after World War II that trade unionism began in colonial Central and East Africa. He continues to argue that African trade unions played a pivotal role in the struggle for independence, thus the labour movement appeared to enjoy a more effective political voice in Africa.[108] Similarly, the study seeks to trace the development of trade unionism in Swaziland and how the Swazi labour movement contributed to the struggle for Swazi independence in the 1960s and for multi-party democracy in post-colonial Swaziland.

Wogu Ananaba, writing on the trade union movement in Africa also traces the development of trade unions in Africa. She begins by classifying the development of trade unions into three main periods. The first period is before the end of World War II; the second is from 1945 to 1960, and the third covers the period since 1961. She then discusses the challenges that trade unions were faced with in Africa particularly during the colonial period. She also discusses the involvement of trade unions in decolonization politics. Finally, Ananaba assesses the performance of trade unions in the post-colonial period in Africa. She provides several reasons for trade unions' rough existence which range from ill-treatment of union leaders and members through coercive state policies, fragmentation and maladministration, indiscipline within the unions, abuse and misuse of funds to undemocratic procedures of the unions.[109] This study also seeks to trace the development of trade unionism in Swaziland and assess its contribution to the decolonization politics and its performance in the post-colonial period in the country.

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[108] C. Orr, "Trade Unionism in Colonial Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 4, 1 (1966), pp. 65-81.
[109] W. Ananaba, *The Trade Union Movement in Africa: Promise and Performance* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1979), pp. 1-8.

In another study, Wogu Ananaba provides a detailed history of the Nigerian trade union movement from 1945 to the mid-1960s.[110] Similarly, Robin Cohen writing on labour and politics in Nigeria, analyses the role of Nigeria's labour federations and the importance of wage determination in the context of Nigeria's changing economy and power groups.[111] Similarly, this study aims to trace the development of the Swazi labour movement and its role on politics.

John Iliffe, writing on the creation of group consciousness among Tanzanian workers between 1929 and 1950, credits the workers as responsible for creating group solidarity. He argues that group consciousness among workers originates from the nature of work, the economic and social position of the workers as well as the workers' response to their position.[112] This study benefits from Iliffe's insights as it also seeks to demonstrate that group consciousness among Swazi workers developed out of the conditions of work and the workers' economic and social positions. The study shows that these workers saw themselves as a group with common interests and then organised to advance their interests, thus learning their need for unity. These workers began to see themselves as a corporate entity whose interests are different from those of the employer (capital), which is a sign of consciousness. The study builds on Iliffe's study by capturing the workers' lived experiences and songs on group consciousness. In a similar vein, Anirudha Gupta[113] argues that the development of trade unionism on the Zambian Copper belt resulted from the conflict between the workers and the government. To Gupta, the desire by the government to control the workers and the determination by the workers to resist such attempts led to the conflict between the two groups. However, the relationship between the workers and government was not always that of conflict. Sometimes the workers collaborated with the government and the political parties. Similarly, the study attempts to show that the relationship between the workers and government and political parties was complex.

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[110] W. Ananaba, *The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1970).

[111] R. Cohen, *Labour and Politics in Nigeria* (London: Heinemann, 1974).

[112] J. Iliffe, "The Creation of Group of Consciousness Among Dockworkers of Dar es Salaam 1929-[19]50", in: R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen (eds.), *The Development of an African Working Class: Studies in Class Formation and Action* (London: Longman, 1975), pp. 49-50.

[113] A. Gupta, "Trade Unionism and Politics on the Copperbelt", in: W. Tordoff (ed.), *Politics in Zambia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), p. 288.

Anthony Clayton and Donald Savage writing on Government and Labour in Kenya between 1895 and 1963, have given a rich, detailed history of the development of a wage labour force, government policy towards Kenyan labour and the growth and politics of Kenya's trade unions.[114] Still on Kenya, Richard Sandbrook deals with the organization of Kenyan trade unions, forms of worker activities and the conflict between union leaders and members.[115]

Robert Bates analyses the relationship of the Zambian government and the mine workers on the copper belt by showing the failure of the Zambian government in its attempt to influence the mine workers to adopt a productionist mindset.[116] In this study the relationship of the Swazi state with that of the Swazi workers is analyzed.

George Gona, writing on history of a trade union movement in East Africa, campaigns for a strong labour movement to improve working and living conditions for East African workers. He calls for trans-nationalization of trade unionism.[117] He traces the development, prospects and challenges of the East African Trade Union Federation during the colonial and post-colonial periods. His focus is on Kenya and Tanzania.[118] The study benefits from Gona's study in that it also seeks to trace the development of trade unionism in Swaziland. It seeks to highlight the history, prospects and constraints of trade unionism in Swaziland during the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Bienefeld traces the rapid expansion of trade unionism in Tanzania. Bienefeld argues that the Tanzanian labour movement was powerful as it forced the colonial government to allow the formation of the influential Tanganyika Federation of Labour which became a major threat to the

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[114] A. Clayton and D. Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963* (London: Frank Cass, 1974).

[115] R. Sandbrook, *Proletarians and African Capitalism: The Kenyan Case, 1960- 1972* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1972).

[116] R. Bates, *Unions, Parties, and Political Development: A Study of the Mine-Workers in Zambia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

[117] G.M. Gona, "Towards a Concrete East African Trade Union Federation: History, Prospects and Constraints", *Journal of African Studies,* Vol. 66, 2-3, 2007, pp. 273-293.

[118] Gona, "Towards a Concrete East African Trade Union Federation..".

colonial government during the struggle for independence.[119] In the same vein, Stephen Goodman writes on trade unions and political parties in East Africa focusing on colonial Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. He argues that trade union movements in these countries were suppressed by their governments and fused together with government political parties. In spite of the historical differences between trade unions and political parties, Goodman, sees some collaboration between the two.[120] The study benefits from Goodman's study as it also seeks to study the relationship between trade unions, government and political parties.

Anne Pitcher explores the reasons why labour movements in Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa have been largely marginalized. He begins by examining the different historical trajectories of organized labour in the different countries. Pitcher then analyses the factors that weakened the influence of the labour movements in all three countries.[121] The study benefits from Pitcher's study because while tracing the history of the Swazi labour movement, it places it within the labour movements in Africa and southern Africa in particular.

Laren Pejstrup's study even though not historical documents the challenges faced by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) and tries to understand its struggle for workers' rights, basic human needs and for political freedom and democracy.[122] The study benefits from Pejstrup's study as it studies the SFTU's contribution to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Piet Konings, attempts to assess the role of teachers' trade unions in Anglophone Cameroon between 1959 and 1972. He argues that Cameroonian teachers were able to preserve their autonomy and disapproved of any close links with the nationalist parties and government. The

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[119] M.A. Bienefeld, "Trade Unions, the Labour Process, and the Tanzanian State", *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 17, 4 (1979), pp. 553-593.

[120] S.H. Goodman, "Trade Unions and Political Parties: The Case of East Africa", *Economic Development and Cultural Change,* Vol. 17, 3 (1969), pp. 338-345.

[121] M.A. Pitcher, "What Has happened to Organized Labor in Southern Africa?", *International Labor and Working Class History,* 72 (2007), pp. 134-160.

[122] S.C.L. Pejstrup, "Swaziland in Transition", *The Interdisciplinary Journal of International Studies,* Vol. 7, 1 (2011), pp. 1-26.

teachers' unions appear to have had considerable bargaining power which increased beginning from the late colonial to the post-colonial period.[123] The study also seeks to trace the role of SNAT as a teachers' trade union (as part of the labour movement in Swaziland) in improving working and living conditions for teachers as well as its role in politics in Swaziland.

Carolyn Baylies and Robin Cohen in their review focusing on labour and trade unionism in West and South Africa argue that the African labour movement was faced with difficult times. They argue that the labour movement was faced with an enormous reduction on its bargaining power due to high unemployment and states hostility. They argue that for the African labour movement to be effective it needs support from other social movements.[124] Marlea Clarke and Carolyn Basset assess the performance of the South African labour movement in the 1980s and 1990s. They argue that the South African working class had great influence and was able to improve working conditions while playing a central role in the processes of political change. However, the movement failed to live up to its expectations on the eve of democracy in South Africa.[125] In a similar vein, Peter Rachleff argues that the South African labour movement played a pivotal role in the struggle against apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s. He argues that in the post-1994 era the labour movement appeared to reach its highest point only to decline after independence.[126] The study benefits from this study as it also seeks to show how the Swazi labour movement championed for workers' rights and wider political change.

W.P. Visser explores the South African labour movement's attitude and responses to, as well the consequences for labour, of the government's declarations of martial law during the conflict over labour issues and for control of the country's industrial workforce.[127] Edwin Babeiya argues that

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[123] P. Konings, "Assessing the Role of Autonomous Teachers' Trade Unions in Anglophone Cameroon, 1959-1972", *Journal of African History*, 47 (2006), pp. 425-436.

[124] C. Baylies and R. Cohen, "Workers, Unions and Popular Protest", *Review of the African Political Economy*, Vol. 39 (1987), pp. 1-3.

[125] M. Clarke and C. Bassett, "South African Trade Unions and Globalisation: Going for the 'high road', getting stuck on the 'low road'", *Work Organization, Labour and Globalisation,* Vol. 2. 1 (2008), pp. 135-151.

[126] P. Rachleff, "On the Ground* With the South African Labor Movement", *Macalester International,* Vol. 9, Undated, p. 291.

[127] W.P. Visser, "The South African Lanour Movement's Responses to Declarations of Martial Law, 1913-1922", (2003), http://scientiamilitaria.journals.ac.za/pub.

trade unions in Tanzania have a very weak role in democratization. This he attributes to the conflicting relationship between trade unions and political parties. Problems within trade unions have also contributed to its passivity in the democratization process in Tanzania.[128] The study benefits from this study as it also traces the contribution of trade unions in the struggle for democratization of Swaziland.

Kally Forrest explores the rise and fall of the National Union of Metal of South Africa (NUMSA) from 1989 to 1995. Focusing on the factors that worked against the union's successful implementation of its new policies, Forrest first discusses the successes of NUMSA in shaping working conditions within its industry and in a macroscopic level in the 1980s.[129] She then goes on to analyse NUMSA's downfall beginning from the early to mid-1990s.[130] The study benefits from Forrest's study as it also analyses the performance of trade unions in the country.

Peter Alexander, writing on women and coal mining in India and South Africa between 1900 and 1940, argues that there were more women employed in India than in South Africa. This disparity, according to Alexander, was caused by the fact that Indian mines used family labour while South African mines needed regimental labour.[131] Whereas this study is not about women and coal mining, it benefits from such studies by including women in the development of the Swazi labour movement. Labour studies in Swaziland have very little information on women. The study seeks to add women history in Swazi labour history.

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[128] E. Babeiya, "Trade Unions and Democratization in Tanzania: An End of Era?" *Journal of Politics and Law,* Vol. 4, 1(2011), pp. 123-131.

[129] K. Forrest, "Out of Time: The National Union of Metalworker's Pursuit of Power: 1989-1995", *Journal of African Studies,* Vol. 66, 2-3, (2007), pp. 365-380.

[130] Forrest, "Out of Time…", pp. 365-380.

[131] P. Alexander, "Women and Coal Mining in India and South Africa, c1900-1940", *Journal of African Studies,* Vol. 66, 2-3, (2007), pp. 201-217.

Jan Kainer,[132] using a feminist approach, argues that literature on labour movements have ignored the contributions that have been made by women. As a result, the history of women in labour and that of their activities has not been captured by many labour historians. Most studies on labour movement lack women agency. This is in spite of the fact that women have played and continue to play a meaningful role in the labour movement. Admittedly, this study is not about women activities in the labour movement, however, it does seek to include women history in the development of the Swazi labour movement. The study acknowledges that women have also made a vital contribution towards the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Conclusion

The different viewpoints on labour history are no doubt useful to this study in underscoring the development of the Swazi labour movement. The study benefits from all the above studies. In particular, this study seeks to emulate the works of labour historians and demonstrate that the Swazi labour movement was capable of winning concessions for the workers as well as influencing the state on political matters. This will be done against the background of a myriad of challenges that the labour movement has been confronted with since its emergence. The historical development that the labour movement underwent were and continue to be all greatly affected by the political, socio-economic dynamic, which to some extent explains that the environment in which the movement exists continually applies pressure to its character. The expansion of the Swazi economy, in particular, the growth in the workforce due to the growth in investment and production, the political developments of the anti-colonial struggles in the Southern African region and beyond, the influx of exiles from neighbouring South Africa fleeing from the racist apartheid regime, and the emergence of Pan-Africanism in Africa, are to some extent, contributing factors to the development of the labour movement in Swaziland.

[132] J. Kainer, "Gendering Union Renewal: Women's Contribution to Labour Movement Revitalization" A Paper prepared for the Union Module of the Gender and Work Database, 2006.

CHAPTER 3

THE CAPITALISATION OF THE SWAZI COLONIAL ECONOMY AND THE SHORTAGE OF LABOUR FOR LOCAL COMPANIES, 1940S-1960S

Introduction

This chapter examines how the evolution of a colonial economy and the subsequent shortage of labour for local companies between the 1940s and 1960s eventually led to the development of a Swazi labour movement. The chapter first discusses the factors that led to the capitalization of a colonial economy in Swaziland after the Second World War. The economic changes that took place after 1945 were a consequence of the imposition of colonial rule. These economic changes played a critical role in the development of the conflict between labour and capital in the following decades. The chapter also discusses the establishment of industries in Swaziland after the Second World War as a consequence of the changing British colonial policy in the British colonial empire. The chapter argues that the advent of capitalism in Swaziland shaped the development of a Swazi labour movement. The development of capitalism shaped the development, character and growth of the Swazi working class. The capital penetration which took place in Swaziland during and after the Second World War led to a very strong demand for local labour which in turn transformed the character of the working class and eventually led to the development of a Swazi labour movement.

Finally, the chapter examines how the shortage of labour for local companies between the 1940s and 1960s led to the development of a Swazi labour movement. The chapter discusses the causes of shortage of labour and the recruitment strategies that were designed to deal with the problem of labour shortage. Consequently, the chapter examines how the competition for Swazi labour between local companies and labour migration contributed to the development of a labour movement in Swaziland. The chapter argues that the evolution of a colonial economy in Swaziland led to the establishment of industries after 1945 which immediately worsened the problem of shortage of labour. This shortage of labour led to high competition for Swazi labour

which in turn led to an awareness among Swazi workers that ultimately led to the development of a Swazi labour movement.

The Changing British Colonial Policy in Swaziland

The British colonial policy in Swaziland began with the imposition of colonial rule at the end of the Anglo-Boer War in 1902. The imposition of colonial rule brought about changes which marked a new era in Swazi history. The defeat of the Boers by the British in the war meant that the latter take over all the territories previously under the jurisdiction of the South African Republic.[133] Britain based her control over Swaziland on the premise that the South African Republic had formerly controlled Swaziland. By virtue of conquest, control of Swaziland passed on to the British.[134] Britain's control of Swaziland was motivated by economic interests.[135] This mirrored the British colonial policy in Swaziland up to 1945.

Once colonial rule was firmly established in the territory in 1903,[136] the British introduced an economic policy that would create conditions for capital accumulation.[137] The British colonial policy in Swaziland should be seen from the lens of the larger perspective of the British colonial policy in Africa. The British colonial policy in Africa could be described as motivated by economic self-interests. The British were mainly concerned with encouraging Africans to produce raw materials for the metropole industries.[138] Since the inception of colonial rule in Africa, the British were only concerned with steps that would help them achieve their economic

[133] The Boers had exercised powers of control, protection and administration over Swaziland before the war.

[134] PRO, DO119/472/C4- Administration of Swaziland: Telegram No. 235 from High Commissioner to Governor of Natal, 21 September 1900. For more details on the administration of Swaziland during this period, see PRO, DO119/693/2435- Administration of Swaziland, 1901.

[135] For a similar view see also, Simelane, "A Historical Discussion…", p. 17.

[136] Colonial rule was established in Swaziland through the Swaziland 1903 order-in-council which placed the country directly under the governor the Transvaal on behalf of the king of England. In 1906 through another order-in-council Swaziland was removed from the control of the governor of the Transvaal to that of the High Commissioner for South Africa. This was followed by the 1907 proclamation which provided for the establishment of a colonial administration and the land partition. For more details see for instance, Matsebula, *A History,* pp. 177-212.

[137] See for instance, Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 33.

[138] A.E. Afigbo et.al, *The Making of Modern Africa* (London: Longman, 1986), Vol. 2, pp. 14-15.

aims. In colonial West Africa the West Africans were producing raw materials and goods that were needed by the metropole industries not the people of West Africa.[139] A similar colonial policy was implemented in Swaziland. Gerald Kunene argues that the major role of the Swazi colonial state was to create conditions for capital accumulation.[140] Similarly, John Daniel argues that Swaziland's political economy was turned primarily into exporting raw materials whose profits and pricing were determined by the buyer (metropole industries).[141]

The British colonial policy in Swaziland up to the outbreak of World War II was to a large extent concerned with creating conditions for capital accumulation and cost minimization. When the British took over control of Swaziland, they practiced parallel rule. Parallel rule simply meant that British leadership style was run concurrently with Swazi traditional leadership style. Thus, there was no total replacement of Swazi way of life. While the British colonial administration ruled the country through laws defining British authority the Swazi monarchy was allowed to maintain authority over the Swazi people.[142] The idea was to avoid the economic burden of administering the territory. As a result, in 1903 Milner, as Governor of Swaziland, was given strict instructions to recognize Swazi customary law.[143] While this may appear to look as if the British had respect for the political autonomy of the Swazi people, it was actually influenced by the "economics of colonialism".[144] Minimal state intervention in Swaziland was meant to minimize administrative costs in the territory. Swazi traditional institutions were used for easy collection of taxes and control of labour.[145] The colonial administration was expected to fund itself and to spend as little as possible on the administrative expenditure of Swaziland. In

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[139] M.Y.H. Kaniki, "The Colonial Economy: The Former British Zones", *UNESCO General History of Africa: Africa Under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935,* Vol. VII (1985), p. 793.

[140] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 33. For a similar view, see Simelane, "A Historical Discussion…", p. 17.

[141] J. Daniel, "The Political Economy of Colonial and Post-Colonial Swaziland", *South African Labour Bulletin,* 1982, p. 90.

[142] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy …", p.34.

[143] Proclamation No.3 of 1904.

[144] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 35.

[145] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy …", p. 36.

principle, by allowing the Swazi monarchy to continue to exercise its political and administrative authority over the Swazi people, the British colonial administration was trying to minimize administrative costs.[146] Between 1920 and 1940 the colonial administration was short for financial resources and was unable to meet its expenditure from its ordinary revenue.[147] The reason for the territory's poor financial stance was due to British colonial policy of cost minimization and lack of economic development.

From the outset Swaziland was treated differently compared to other colonies in Central, East and West Africa.[148] The territory was controlled by the Resident Commissioner who was responsible to the High Commissioner in South Africa rather than Britain.[149] This is a clear demonstration of the British policy of cost minimization and non-development in the territory during the early years of colonial rule. The colonial policy was mainly concerned with protecting settler interests to those of the Swazi while also protecting the interests of South African capital over those of the settlers.

The conditions for capital accumulation in Swaziland were created through land partition, taxation and labour recruitment for South African capital. The land partition of 1907 was one strategy through which the colonial administration created conditions for capital accumulation. The land partition in Swaziland, as Kunene[150] argues, should be seen from the lens of the larger process of subordination of African economies in Southern Africa to capital accumulation within the region.[151] The land partition was designed to create source of cheap labour to work in the South African mines. By encouraging labour recruitment to the mines, the colonial government

[146] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy …", pp.36-37.

[147] SNA, Files B32/20/21 to B23/40/41, Swaziland Secretariat, Estimates of Government Revenue and Expenditure, Mbabane, 1920-1921 to 1940-1941.

[148] Swaziland was made a protectorate together with Basutoland and Bechuanaland.

[149] H. Ashton, "The High Commission Territories" in: *Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa* (London: 1949), p. 711.

[150] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 67.

[151] In West Africa land was not expropriated from the West Africans. However, this was done to ensure that the West Africans produce enough quality goods for the metropole industries.

raised income which was accumulated through capitation fees as well as fees for recruitment passes. The colonial administration also benefitted from funds taken directly from Swazi labour migrants through head tax.[152] On another note the land partition in Swaziland also helped to create a cheap source of labour to work in the settler farms. However, since the colonial government did not have a direct revenue benefit on the engagement of Swazi labour in settler farms, it did not help settler farmers to recruit adequate labour to work in their farms. Thus, settler farmers were mostly faced with severe labour shortages.[153] This demonstrates that the colonial administration was concerned with raising income to cover the administrative costs of running the territory. It should be noted, however, that the Swazi people did not passively accept the land partition, they strongly protested the land partition.[154]

Taxation is another form through which the colonial government created conditions for capital accumulation in Swaziland. Through taxation, Britain hoped to achieve "colonial self-sufficiency and balanced budgets" in the territory.[155] As already indicated, the colonial administration in Swaziland was expected fund itself and to spend as little as possible on the administration of Swaziland. Given the fact that metropole government was unwilling to spend money on the development of Swaziland the colonial government sought to raise funds through the imposition of taxes on the Swazis. On the one hand the imposition of taxes on the Swazi people could be viewed from the larger perspective of the British colonial policy of cost minimization in Africa. The revenue that was raised through taxation was used to cover the administrative costs of the territory. Thus, Britain could not spend money on administering Swaziland. On the other hand, the imposition of taxes on the Swazis was meant to force them to sell their labour to the South African mines. Thus, the imposition of taxation on the Swazi people was also driven by the British economic needs. The colonial government in Swaziland could meet the costs of administering the territory using the revenue they received from the South African mines, through head tax. The Swazi people resented and strongly protested the

[152] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", pp. 141-143.

[153] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", pp. 142-143.

[154] For a detailed study on Swazi protests to the land partition, see Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…".

[155] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 46.

imposition of taxation, particularly the tax increase in 1920. Swazi protests to the imposition of taxation took a rather different form compared to some colonies where there were tax revolts.[156]

Further, the colonial development policy in Swaziland between 1927 and 1939 was not aimed at developing the economy and infrastructure of the territory. Attempts were made to improve agriculture through the establishment of the Land and Agricultural Loan Fund in 1929 but it was all in vain. The Pim Report highlighted that the fund was not well administered, thus it failed to produce the desired results.[157] Consequently, the improvement and progress of agriculture remained a slow process.[158] It also did not help that the British colonial policy in Swaziland was heavily dependent on the South African economy.[159] There was also the issue of incorporating Swaziland together with the High Commission territories into the Union of South Africa.[160] These stagnated any development in the country. The outbreak of the Second World War disrupted the talks of incorporating Swaziland into South Africa. Overall, the British colonial policy in Swaziland up to the period before the Second World War was not aimed at developing the economically. There was very little that was done by the British government towards the economic development of the territory. Consequently, the economy of the territory remained stagnated throughout the pre and inter-war periods.

After the Second World War the British colonial policy of self-sufficiency and neglect in Swaziland changed to the policy of state intervention and 'development'[161]. The changing British colonial policy in Swaziland should be conceptualized from the larger framework of the changing British colonial policy in Africa after the Second World War. As Hamilton S. Simelane argues, "the economic changes that took place in Swaziland after the war should be

[156] For more information on taxation in Swaziland see Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", pp. 40-57.

[157] A. Pim Report on financial and economic situation in Swaziland: Great Britain, Command Papers, cmd 414 in: Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…".

[158] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…"pp. 220-221.

[159] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 226.

[160] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 226.

[161] Development should be seen more from the perspective of the metropole economy than the Swazi economy.

conceptualized within the larger framework of changes in the economies of the metropole".[162] While the British colonial policy up to the Second World War was that of neglect, stagnation and underdevelopment, after the war the colonial policy witnessed state intervention to the economy of the territory. The colonial administration began to place more emphasis on encouraging economic production.[163] The Second World War, therefore, could be seen as the impetus for the changing British colonial policy in Africa. This is because the British colonial policy in Africa before the war was based mainly on accumulating capital and exploiting raw materials from the colonies and it was not motivated to shoulder administrative costs of the conquered territories.

Any change in colonial policies in Africa, however, should be viewed from the lens of the changes in the economies of the metropole".[164] According to H.S. Simelane, there were economic changes in Swaziland from 1938 onwards due to an expanding economy which speeded-up the production process in both human resources and raw materials.[165] However, it should be noted that economic changes were not meant to benefit the colonies but to benefit the metropolitan countries although this is yet to be tested by scholars. The chief objective of improving the economic situation of the colonies was mainly to improve the British economy. Emphasis was placed on pure productive investment such as extensive exploitation of mineral resources, other materials and cash crops.[166] "Britain primarily promoted development projects which were complementary to her own needs."[167] The development of communications in Swaziland was designed mainly to increase exports. All weather roads together with the replacement of all bridges were built to link roads from production centers to the main road network to export centers.[168] Similarly, in colonial West Africa the railway network system was built to expedite production of goods. By 1940, West Africa had a total of 5, 200 miles of

[162] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 9.

[163] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 239.

[164] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 9.

[165] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 12.

[166] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 242.

[167] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", pp. 252-254.

[168] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 273.

railway line between British and French colonies. Roads were built to feed the railway lines.[169] Evidently, little if any attempt was made to use communications in colonial Africa to stimulate the indigenous economy. In the case of Swaziland, for instance, social developments such as education and health were relegated into a secondary position.[170] Overall, the main objective of British colonial policy after the Second World War was to increase production for British industry which had been badly affected by the war. As such, the major drive of post war development policy in Swaziland was to help to achieve this aim.

After the Second World War II Britain needed the development of industries in colonial Africa to process raw materials which were then transported to Europe, instead of importing unprocessed raw materials from Africa. After the war the metropolis changed their colonial policies from importing unprocessed raw materials to importing processed goods from Africa. Consequently, the colonies experienced a vast increase in public expenditure on African development. Britain began to give larger sums that she had never made available under her previous colonial policy. Notably, most of this funding took the form of outright grants as opposed to loans.[171] Britain officially began the new policy with the British Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. In addition, in 1948 Britain funded the Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) and the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) to initiate and finance productive efforts in the African colonies.[172] As a consequence, CDC was one of the British corporations which spearheaded the development of industries in Africa in the post-World War II era. These changes in colonial policies provided the impetus for economic change in Africa.

The establishment of industries in Swaziland was part of the changing British colonial policy in Africa after World War II. The British government, through the CDC sought to stimulate economic development in Swaziland after 1945. With the support of the Overseas Resources Development Act of 1948, a few industries were established in Swaziland between 1938 and

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[169] A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (Longman: New York, 1973), pp. 194-198.

[170] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 242.

[171] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 9.

[172] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 9.

1960.[173] These include the Havelock Asbestos Mine which was established in 1938 by a British consortium Turner and Newell in the north-western part of Swaziland about 10 kilometers west of Pigg's Peak town along the eMlembe Mountains.[174] The Peak Timbers was formed in 1947 near Pigg's Peak in the North Western part of Swaziland. It was established by a group of investors which included South African businessmen, Barings Bank (Danish) and Barclays Overseas Development Corporation (British).[175] In 1948 the Usuthu Forests Company (which later became the Usuthu Pulp Company) was established at Bhunya astride the Usuthu River in the north-western part of Swaziland.[176] The Usuthu forestry project was initiated by the CDC in 1948.[177] In 1958 the Ubombo Sugar Limited was established at Big Bend in the Lubombo region.[178] The company was formed by an amalgamation of South African and British investors[179] and CDC.[180] In 1960 the Mhlume (Swaziland) Sugar Company Limited was formed in the northern lowveld following a joint venture project between Sir J.L. Hullet and Sons and the CDC.[181] As a result, by the mid-1950s the Swazi economy had become integrated into the world market as a supplier of timber products, sugar and other products, with markets in Britain, Europe and South Africa.

The establishment of companies in the territory between 1938 and 1960 created a very strong demand for local labour. As Booth points out, the establishment of Peak Timbers Ltd gave Swaziland what became the second largest commercial forestry acreage in the world. In addition,

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[173] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 129.

[174] T.B. Kunene, "The Socio-Economic Impact of Mining in Swaziland on the Surrounding Communities, 1939-1993: The Case of the Havelock Mine", BA Project, UNISWA, 2016, p. 8.

[175] B. Mlangeni, "The Impact of the Forest Industry on the Development of Swaziland: A Case Study of Peak Timbers Limited, 1996-2005", BA Project, UNISWA, 2006, p. 2.

[176] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 129.

[177] Simelane, "Capital Penetration and …", pp. 107-108.

[178] P.J. Gosnell, *Big Bend: A History of the Swaziland Bushveld* (Durban: Peter J. Gosnell, 2001), p. 29.

[179] S.N. Khumalo, "The Impact of the Investment of Ubombo Ranches Limited in Sugar Cane Plantation on the Big Bend Community, 1958-1970", BA Project, UNISWA, 2009, pp. 2-3.

[180] N.N. Hlophe, "The Socio-Economic Impact of the Spread of Sugar Plantations from the Lowveld to the Highveld: The Case of Malkerns, 1994-2006", BA Project, UNISWA, 2007, pp. 1-2.

[181] Hlophe, "The Socio-Economic Impact…", p. 2.

Usuthu Forests grew to an estate covering 123, 000 acres planted with approximately 55 million coniferous trees. Furthermore, the establishment of two large sugar mills provided for the employment of about 22 percent of the country's workforce.[182] In essence, more local labour was required to ensure effective production in these companies. Recruitments were initially carried out at regional level and later at national level in order to meet the labour demands of these companies. This strong demand for local labour created competition between local companies and ultimately contributed to the labour shortages faced by local companies during the 1950s. The strong demand for local labour in the territory should be understood from the background of shortage of labour for settler farmers and an already migrating labour force to the South African mines and plantations. The fact that local companies had to scramble for a labour force that was already depleted by large numbers which preferred working in South Africa where wages were relatively higher meant that local companies were faced with a momentous task of mobilizing an adequate labour force. Ultimately, local companies failed to recruit an adequate labour force and were subsequently faced with labour shortages. [183]

Shortage of labour for local companies, 1940s-1960s

Following their establishment, the country's companies faced a huge task of mobilizing an adequate labour force. These companies were soon faced with a problem of shortage of labour. This shortage of labour was precipitated by a number of reasons. As indicated earlier, by the mid-1950s the Swazi economy had become integrated into the world market supplying products to Britain, Europe and South Africa. This triggered a very strong demand for local labour against the background of shortage of labour for settler farmers and an already migrating labour force to the South African mines and plantations. Consequently, there was intense competition for Swazi labour among the newly established industries. The country's companies also had to deal with labour migration to South Africa. Ultimately, local companies were rocked by labour shortages between the 1940s and 1960s. In response to this shortage of labour, local companies together with the colonial government and Swazi traditional leadership made several attempts to deal with the problem of labour shortages. Wage increments, payment of recruitment advance

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[182] Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition…", p. 133.

[183] Hlophe, "The Socio-Economic Impact…", p. 2.

and the importation of African labour from the southern African region were some strategies that were adopted to deal with labour shortages in Swaziland between the 1940s and 1960s.

The problem of labour shortage in Swaziland dates back to the advent of colonialism. By 1909, settler farmers were facing a shortage of an adequate labour supply to work in their farms. Thus, through the Land Partition of 1909 the colonial government hoped to solve the problem of shortage of labour in the settler farms. The colonial state sought to create a cheap pool of labour to work in the settler farms. The idea was to coerce Swazis to stay and work in the settler farms like it happened with the Africans in the Transvaal.[184] However, the land partition could not solve the problem of labour shortage within the settler farms, especially without the support of the colonial state. The colonial state was actively involved in the recruitment process of local labour for the South African mines, thus it could not help the settlers to secure adequate labour for their farms. As mentioned earlier, the colonial state in Swaziland played a dual role of protecting settler and South African interests. However, when these interests conflicted with each other the colonial state chose to protect the latter's interests because it stood to benefit a lot from the revenue of exporting Swazi labour to the South African mines, in particular.[185]

According to Gerard Kunene, however, the exportation of Swazi labour to the South African mines was not the only cause of labour shortages for settler farmers. He argues that another cause of shortage of labour in the settler farms was cash crop farming by Swazis who were residing in the reserves.[186] This indicates that Swazis, in spite of being pushed to the reserves which were largely infertile, designed survival strategies to earn a living and refused to stay and work in the settler farms as Selborne had suggested. Attempts by settler farmers to convince the colonial government to stop Swazi farmers from engaging in cash crop farming landed on deaf ears. For instance, the colonial government dismissed suggestions by settler farmers to stop Swazi farmers from growing cotton. The settler farmers had alleged that Swazi farmers would steal European grown cotton and or Swazi cotton cultivation would result to uncontrolled spread

[184] SNA, File 45/07/2129, Memorandum by Selborne, 3 February, 1908.

[185] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", pp. 141-143.

[186] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 144.

of crop diseases and insect pests.[187] Ultimately, repeated desperate attempts by settler farmers to convince the colonial state to sort out the problem of shortage of labour in their farms were unsuccessful. When these companies were established, therefore, there was already a problem of shortage of labour in the territory, in particular the settler farms.

Labour migration to the South African mines and plantations also contributed to the shortage of labour for local companies. When the local industries were established Swazi male workers were already migrating to work in South Africa. Some of these workers were recruited by the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC). [188] As Jonathan Crush argues, the establishment of NRC increased the number of Swazis recruited for the gold mines in South Africa. Approximately 26, 000 Swazi male adults are believed to be employed in South Africa by 1930.[189] This number excludes those workers who migrated to work in the mines on their own account.[190] From the given evidence it would appear that no Swazi women were recruited by the NRC to work in South Africa. On the other hand, however, it gives the impression that only Swazi males migrated to work in South Africa. However, Miranda Miles' study on Swazi female migrants to the Witwatersrand mines between 1920 and 1970 is a clear indication that even Swazi women migrated to work in South Africa.[191] This means that more Swazis were employed in South Africa. Against this background of labour migration to the already established South African companies, local companies had to compete for the remaining Swazi labour between them. This made the task of mobilizing an adequate labour force too much for the local companies.

During the mid-1940s the NRC was already facing challenges in recruiting an adequate labour force in Swaziland. The situation worsened after the end of the Second World War. The nature of the competition for Swazi labour had changed in the post-1945 era from being only between

[187] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", pp. 144-146.

[188] The NRC was the labour recruiting arm of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines in Swaziland which was established in 1912.

[189] J. Crush, "Swazi Migrant Workers to the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, 1886-1920", *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 12, 1 (1986), p. 35.

[190] Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development…", p. 40.

[191] Miles, "Missing Women…", p. 71.

European settler farmers and South African mines to include Swazi local companies.[192] In the 1950s the competition for Swazi labour heightened and the Swazi workers manipulated it to their own advantage.[193] Swazi workers took advantage of the competition for their labour between local and South African companies in the 1950s by choosing to work in the South African mines where wages were higher compared to those offered by local companies.[194] This is a demonstration of a high level of awareness by Swazi workers. It is an indication that Swazi workers carefully chose South African companies ahead of local companies because they were aware of the wage differences between these companies. The workers were aware of the strong demand for their labour, thus they carefully chose companies that offered higher wages with better working and living conditions. Elsewhere in Africa, African workers demonstrated an intelligence system of making critical assessments of wages and working conditions in the different parts of the labour market.[195] Clearly, Swazi workers like their African counterparts carefully chose employment centers by making critical assessments of wages and ultimately went on to work for South African mines because they paid better wages than local companies.

Apart from having to deal with workers preferring to work in South Africa rather than locally, local companies also had to contend with their employees preferring to leave to work in South Africa after being recruited. Hlanze argues that in the early 1950s some employees of Usuthu Forests left the company to work in South Africa after being recruited by 'unlicensed'[196] labour agents.[197] For instance, Usuthu Forests' General Manager, C.S. Hubbard complained to the visiting labour officer, P.R. Forsyth-Thompson about the recruiting of the company's employees. Hubbard complained that one of the company's sections was getting the attention of some

[192] Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition…", pp. 125-126.

[193] Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition…", p. 126.

[194] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 37; see also Simelane (ed.), "A Historical Discussion…", p. 28; Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition…", p. 125.

[195] See for instance, Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness in Black Miners…", Van Onselen, *Chibaro,* Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of African Worker Consciousness in Rhodesia…", Perrings, *Black Miners in Central Africa.*

[196] The recruitment of African labour was confined by the African Labour Proclamation, Chapter 70, to licensed agents. See for instance, Annual Report of the Labour Officer for the year 1963, p. 7.

[197] *Annual Report of the Labour Officer for the year 1963,* p. 7.

recruiter who lured away recruits newly appointed and took them to South Africa.[198] First, this demonstrates that local companies, apart from losing a labour force to the South African mines through labour migration, also had to wrestle with the recruitment of their labour which was being enticed into working in South Africa. Second, this demonstrates an element of preference on the part of the workers to agree to be recruited from their jobs in the country. It is a demonstration of an awareness by the workers to withdraw their labour in favour of better paying jobs in South Africa. This recruitment of workers from local companies contributed to the serious labour shortage which rocked local companies during the 1950s.

There was also stiff competition between the local companies which contributed to labour shortage. Miranda Miles argues that between the 1940s and 1950s there was intense competition for Swazi labour between local mines and plantations.[199] The establishment of companies in the territory between 1938 and 1957 increased the demands for local labour. In particular, the establishment of Peak Timbers Ltd gave Swaziland what became the second largest commercial forestry acreage in the world. In addition, Usuthu Forests grew to an estate covering 123, 000 acres planted with approximately 55 million coniferous trees. Furthermore, the establishment of two large sugar mills provided for the employment of about 22 percent of the country's workforce.[200] In essence, more local labour was required to ensure effective production in these companies. Eventually, these companies struggled to recruit an adequate labour force as the competition between them intensified. As Hlanze argues, "Peak Timbers began its labour recruitment efforts earlier than Usuthu Forests. It drew its labour force from the Highveld of Swaziland stretching from Mbabane to Pigg's Peak and the surrounding areas in the northern Hhohho region."[201] When Usuthu Forests was established in 1948 it drew its labour force around Bhunya and later around Mbabane, Mankayane and Ntondozi.[202] This increased competition for labour between these two companies. Usuthu Forests failed to recruit an

[198] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 40.

[199] Miles, "Missing Women…", p. 69.

[200] Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition…", p. 133.

[201] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p.

[202] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p.

adequate labour force and was faced with a labour shortage. Due to this labour shortage, the company was forced to mobilise part of its labour force from the southern part of Swaziland. The situation was so desperate such that Usuthu Forest was forced to go to the communities to beg people to join the company. No educational background was required since unskilled labour was needed for an extensive tree planting programme.[203] In spite of these recruitment efforts by the company labour continued to be inadequate. The continued labour shortage forced the company to begin to draw its labour force from all over the country but with little success.[204] The establishment of the Ubombo Ranches Company at Big Bend in 1958 [205] made the task of mobilizing labour even more difficult not only for already established companies but also the newly established company. It is clear from the evidence provided above that competition for local between local companies also contributed to the labour shortages faced by local companies during the 1950s. The fact that local companies had to scramble for a labour force that was already depleted by large numbers which preferred working in South Africa where wages were relatively higher meant that local companies were faced with a momentous task of mobilizing an adequate labour force. Ultimately, local companies failed to recruit an adequate labour force and were subsequently faced with labour shortages.

Also, during the early 1950s, there was a labour shortage among local industries because Swazis withdrew their labour if and when it suited them. Swazi workers during this period were not entirely dependent on wage economy but also on the village economy. They would withdraw their labour and remain in their villages, particularly during the ploughing season. Withdrawal of labour during the ploughing season was also prevalent in colonial Kenya. Sharon Stichter argues that labour withdrawals in colonial Kenya were most frequent when peasant production offered Kenyan workers more economic opportunities.[206] Similarly, Swazi workers left local companies during the ploughing season. This demonstrates that the workers were aware that this season offered them with farming opportunities which would enable them to feed their

[203] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p.

[204] Simelane, *Colonialism,* pp. 154-155.

[205] Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 29.

[206] Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya*, p. 164.

families.[207] This withdrawal of labour by the workers led to shortage of labour among Swazi companies. In addition, Swazi workers carefully chose the time to enter into wage labour. When agricultural produce offered them more opportunities, Swazi workers remained in their villages. Thus, local companies found it very difficult to recruit Swazi labour. Subsequently, the companies faced a labour shortage in their formative years.[208]

Further, shortage of labour among local companies in the 1950s was caused by the fact that most Swazis remained in their villages and continued to enjoy a degree of economic autonomy. During this period most Swazis could live entirely on the village economy. They had no economic compulsion to enter into wage labour. As Simelane argues, their village environment was able to produce enough food to sustain them and their families.[209] With the local environment enabling the Swazi men to produce enough food to sustain them and their families they found no obligation to enter into wage labour to supplement their produce. This left local companies with a huge task of mobilizing a labour force and were subsequently faced with shortages of labour.

Due to the fact that Swazi workers were employed as unskilled labour, the work that they were doing was very difficult and demanding. For instance, at Usuthu Forests during the early years cheap unskilled labour was needed "for an intensive tree planting and site development".[210] Workers had to dig pits and plant trees as well as remove big rocks using mules. Workers were also needed for the construction of a feeder road to the forests. This kind of work was very demanding, particularly if we consider the large areas bought by the company. The same process was followed at Peak Timbers. In the sugar plantations an unskilled labour force was needed for cane planting, weeding and cutting.[211] This meant that the companies needed a large labour force. However, as already argued in the introductory part of this section, during the

[207] Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition…", p. 128.

[208] Simelane, *Colonialism,* pp. 154-155.

[209] See for instance, Simelane, *Colonialism*, pp. 161-162.

[210] *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1960,* p. 46.

[211] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 154; Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development…", p. 40.

1950s the company was faced with a labour shortage because most Swazis were still very much depended on the village economy, thus they had no economic compulsion to enter into wage labour. The companies, therefore, had difficulty in recruiting an adequate labour force. Using the Usuthu Forests as an example, Simelane argues that the company was only able to recruit 240 workers by mid-1950 instead of the over 3, 500 that the company hoped it would have recruited during this time.[212] In spite of its large recruiting efforts, the company failed to create a sizeable labour force, particularly during the early 1950s. It would appear that this case in point was experienced by all the other companies. In addition, due to the demanding nature of unskilled work, Swazi workers were quick to individually withdraw their labour when working conditions proved unbearable. Since nearly all the Swazi workers in the early years of wage employment were not used to the demands of wage labour they found the work very difficult while the reward was not sufficient. The workers responded by completely withdrawing their labour from the local companies without notice after getting paid.[213] That local workers completely withdrew their labour after getting paid is an indication of an awareness that they had to get a reward for their labour first before leaving. They carefully chose the time to withdraw their labour. Complete individual withdrawal of labour resulted to critical labour shortages among local companies.

In response to this acute shortage of labour, local companies adopted several strategies which, however, did not bear much fruits. Local companies responded by importing African labour from the Southern African region. As a result, Swaziland became both an exporter and importer of labour. She continued to export labour to South Africa and also imported African labour from the Southern African region. Evidence indicates that labour migrants from Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Mozambique came to work in Swaziland.[214] Interestingly, Swazis continued to migrate to higher paying jobs in South Africa. The highest number of African immigrants was employed at Havelock Asbestos Mine. In 1959 at Havelock Asbestos Mine, for instance, out of a total of 1, 565 labourers 955 were foreign African labourers. The percentage of foreign African labourers

[212] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 154; Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development …", p. 44.

[213] SNA, File 3402/4, Annual Report of Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, for the Year 1960.

[214] Miles, "Missing Women…", p. 69.

at this company was slightly above 60%. Table 1.1 below shows the number of foreign African labourers vis-à-vis the total number of labourers in the major local companies by 1959.

TABLE 1: AFRICAN LABOURERS IN MAJOR LOCAL COMPANIES, 1959

COMPANY	TOTAL LABOURERS	FOREIGN LABOURERS
Havelock Asbestos Mine	1, 565	955
Peak Timbers Ltd	1, 471	175
Usuthu Pulp Company	1, 189	7
Ubombo Ranches	1, 293	466
Mhlume Sugar Company	2, 010	364
Totals	**7, 528**	**1, 967**

Source: *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1959.*

The table above indicates that local companies, as a means to solve the problem of labour shortage, imported labour from other countries in southern Africa. This importation of migrant labour, however, should not be understood to mean that the problem of labour shortage was solved. Local companies continued to face the problem of labour shortage.

Local companies also resorted to child and women labour to try to sort out the problem of shortage of labour. Addressing the issue of child labour, Simelane argues that between 1914 and 1947, children were employed by settler farmers in Swaziland as a means to solve the problem of shortage of labour in the farms. This farm labour shortage was caused by the tenacious labour withdrawal by male adult workers.[215] Similarly, local companies used child labour to solve the problem of labour shortage. The shortage of male workers was not, however, the sole reason for the employment of women and children in Swaziland. Simelane [216] argues, for instance, that failure of the rains in 1943 badly affected the rural economy and eventually forced women and children into wage labour. It should be noted, however, that the employment of women and children in Swaziland dates back to the pre-First World War period. In the late 1930s women

[215] H.S. Simelane, "Landlords, The State, and Child Labour in Colonial Swaziland, 1914-1947", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* Vol. 31, (3) (1998), p. 572.

[216] Simelane, *Colonialism,* pp. 146-147.

and children were already employed in the mines. During this period, the conditions seemed to favour the employment of women and children. Justifying their exploitation of 10 year old Swazi boys, employers argued that these boys were as strong as 13 year old Europeans. The colonial government also supported the employment of children. The government argued that it was to the benefit of the young boys to be engaged in wage labour. To these colonial officials and employers the Swazi boys were being taught to do something useful instead of lying idle. The High Commissioner connived with the capitalists and favoured the employment of young boys. His argument was that the boys benefited from the training they got through employment. The High Commissioner was further against ending the employment of these young boys arguing that there was no compulsion to go school for them. The outbreak of war in 1939 also precipitated the employment of women and children in the country. Women and child labour became more in demand during the war. A sizable number was employed in the country's companies.[217] Peak Timbers used child labour, although in later years it became a social problem. In the compounds the young boys are said to have played a substitute female role. This was because the compounds were dominated by male workers who were not accompanied by their wives and children.[218] Usuthu Forests also employed young boys and women to try to solve the problem of labour shortage. In 1950, for instance, out of about 500 workers about 321 workers were women and children. At the end of 1951 the company managed to recruit only 150 workers made up mostly of women and children.[219] In spite of the increasing number of women and children employed, labour shortages continued. Local companies continued to face the problem of shortage of labour.

This shortage of labour motivated the management of local companies to connive with the Swazi traditional ruling system to try to improve their recruitment efforts. A recruitment site was built for the timber companies in Horo, Pigg's Peak, an area closer to where Peak Timbers

[217] Although available evidence does not indicate the exact number of women and children that were employed during the Second World War it appears that a substantial number was employed.

[218] Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development …", p. 42.

[219] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 155; see also Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 37.

operated.[220] When results were not forthcoming, this strategy was modified and Swazi chiefs were used to recruit labour. Sydney Williams, who was first appointed as the Chief Recruiting Officer of the Peak Timbers in 1948 and later Usuthu Forests in 1950, was allowed to carry out propaganda campaigns all over the country. Williams organized meetings in the chiefs' kraals (*imiphakatsi*) encouraging Swazis to work for the Usuthu Forests.[221] Peak Timbers carried a similar recruitment campaign. Under the headship of R.P. Stephens, a large gathering was convened at the company site in which king Sobhuza II motivated Swazis to work for the company.[222] This monarchical involvement in the process of labour mobilization was motivated by the king's desire to exert control over the working class. The king was afraid that Swazi workers who were employed in South Africa were exposed to bad foreign influence, amid the political unrest in South Africa at the time. A politically influenced Swazi labour force, the king feared, would question the relevance of the monarchical system in the country. On another level, the monarchical involvement in the labour mobilization process was an attempt by the monarchy to uphold traditional and cultural values among Swazi workers. In a rapidly changing socio-political environment, king Sobhuza II used culture in the local companies in an ideological and traditional power politics to exert control and maintain loyalty from the working class.[223] The monarchical involvement made the recruits to believe that their employment in the local companies was a concession from the king.[224]

In addition, Usuthu Forests by 1957 had appointed E.D. Glaeser as its Labour Officer responsible for the recruitment of and dismissal of all labour. Hlanze argues that there were 6 recruiting agents under the company's Labour Officer which were deployed at different centers. There were 2 in Manzini, 1 Mankayane, 2 at Gege and 1 at Mliba. These runners received a salary from the Usuthu Forests Company. On top of the salary, runners were also entitled to a

[220] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 154; Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development …", p. 44; Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 36.

[221] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 155.

[222] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 155.

[223] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 56. See also, Macmillan, "Anthropologists and 'Traditionalists'…", p. 555.

[224] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 155.

capitation fee (an amount which was fixed at the same level for all runners) of 2/- for each worker over ten in number recruited in one month. Recruits were collected from the above mentioned centers on the advice of the runners.[225] Despite this recruitment effort, however, Usuthu Forests failed to recruit an adequate labour force. Thus, the company and other local companies continued to face a labour shortage. In light of this labour shortage local companies continued to devise strategies which would help them recruit a sizeable labour force and help reduce the labour shortages.

The monarchical involvement strategy, however, failed to yield the desired results for local companies. The recruited labour force was still inadequate and was made up mostly of women and children.[226] In light of this shortage of labour, local companies began using wages as a strategy of luring Swazi labour. Usuthu Forests was the first company to use wages as a way of attracting a labour force. This was due to the fact that the impact of labour shortages was heavily experienced at the company. The company believed that wages were the only useful strategy to attract Swazi workers.[227] Management of Usuthu Forests, Simelane argues, was forced to increase wages as a means to attract an adequate labour force. In the early 1950s, therefore, the company increased its basic wage from £3.00 to £6.50 for African workers.[228] As the evidence indicates, this wage increment was by over 100%. It shows just how desperate the situation was for the company in terms of labour shortages. The wage increment, however, should not be understood to mean that Swazi workers began to earn a fair income from the company because Europeans earned far more compared to Africans. Whereas Africans were paid from £3.00 to £6.50, Europeans were paid £54.00 monthly.[229] This implies that the lowest paid African worker was paid £51.00 less than white workers were paid. Also, the wage of the highest paid African worker was £47.50 lower than that of the white workers. The workers were aware of the wage gap between Africans and Europeans was huge and this subsequently resulted to problems

[225] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 56.

[226] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 155.

[227] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 156.

[228] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 156.

[229] Simelane, *Colonialism* p. 157; Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 38.

between the workers and management in later years.[230] Other local companies were also forced to adopt the strategy using wage increment to attract local labour. The late 1950s, therefore, saw a rise in wages for African workers.[231]

Explaining the reason for paying low wages to Africans Simelane argues that colonial employers in the country generally came to the conclusion that Swazi employees were single persons, "thus they were paid bachelor wages".[232] Local companies during the period in question paid low wages to African workers because they assumed that African employees were unmarried people. However, the payment of low wages to Africans in the country was one way of minimising the local companies' costs and maximising their profits. This is because there is no evidence suggesting that the wages for married and single Africans were different with married Africans being paid a little more than single Africans. Local companies as capitalist companies were set to make a profit by minimising their expenditure, which included the payment of wages.

Local industries also tried to attract local labour using very high cash advances. According to Simelane, cash advances were not new in the Swazi labour market.[233] However, during this period these cash advances were unprecedentedly high and discriminated against agents recruiting for foreign companies. The advances were used to pay taxes, fines as well as debts to store owners or to buy food for family members that remained behind when a person was recruited. Interestingly, the South African NRC was not allowed to give advances of more than £3.00 while local companies were allowed to give advances of between £5.00 and £10.00.[234] This was a way of tilting the scales of labour mobilization towards local companies and driving the foreign companies out of the competition. Unsurprisingly, through these high cash advances local companies were able to drive some foreign recruiters out of the labour mobilization

[230] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 85-98. At Ubombo Ranches wage differences between African and European workers became a source of conflict between the African workers and the management of the company.

[231] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 156.

[232] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 157.

[233] The payment of cash advances was made possible by the 1913 Native Labour Registration Act which was amended in 1950 through the Proclamation No. 82 of 1950.

[234] Simelane, *Colonialism*, pp. 157-158.

competition.[235] It should not appear, however, as if these high cash advances benefited the recruited persons. Cash advances only benefited employers. Describing a cash advance, Simelane states that it was a sum of money or substitute of it in any form offered by a labour agent or employer to a recruited person on condition that they shall repay it out of their wages to be received by them or provide their labour which was equivalent to the given advance.[236] Clearly, cash advances only helped employers tie down workers for a period of time. Cash advances did, however, yield positive results for local companies, albeit very slightly. Local companies were able to increase the number of recruited labour. By the end of 1952 Peak Timbers had succeeded in increasing its labour force to 2, 000 and Usuthu Forests to roughly 2, 500 workers.[237] The positive results yielded by cash advances, however, did not ultimately solve the problem of labour shortage for local companies. Local companies continued to face the problem of shortage of labour.

H.S. Simelane argues that, in spite of large recruitment efforts, local companies failed to create an adequate labour force during the period under investigation.[238] In this context, local companies continued to be short of labour. This resonates with Phimister's argument on labour migrants in other parts of colonial Southern Africa, namely that African workers developed an elaborate system of intelligence and avoided companies that paid lower wages. It also reflects that Swazi workers developed an elaborate intelligence system for avoiding companies that paid lower wages. Hlanze argues that "Swazi workers returning from South African mines told their relatives of the higher wages migrants were paid there. People also envied the clothes and jewellery which the migrants showed off when they returned home."[239] This enabled them to

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[235] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 158.

[236] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 157.

[237] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 159.

[238] Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development…" p. 45.

[239] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 40-41.

understand and exploit varying wage levels throughout the southern African regional economy.[240]

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the historical background of labour and capital penetration in Swaziland. It argues that the colonial policy in Swaziland began with the imposition of colonial rule at the end of the Anglo-Boer War in 1902. The defeat of the Boers by the British in the war meant that the British take over Swaziland. The British took control of Swaziland to protect their own economic interests. Once colonial rule was firmly established the British introduced an economic policy of capital accumulation and transformed the country into a producer of raw materials and a market for British industrial products. This largely resonates with the British colonial policy throughout the African continent. Thus, British colonial policy in Swaziland should be seen from the lens of the larger perspective of British colonial policy in Africa. Parallels could be drawn from French West Africa where the West African economy was turned into a producer of raw materials and goods that were needed by the metropole industries, not the people of West Africa. The chapter concurs with Gerald Kunene's and John Daniel's arguments that Swaziland's economy was changed primarily into exporting raw materials whose profits and pricing was determined by the metropole industries. During and after the Second World War there were economic changes in Swaziland and Africa generally. These economic changes were a direct result of the war which expedited the production process in both human resource and raw materials. From this perspective, economic changes were not meant to benefit the colonies but the metropolitan countries. The Second World War, therefore, could be seen as the motivation for the changing British colonial policy in Africa.

The chapter has discussed how the development of capitalism shaped the development of a Swazi labour movement. It argues that the development of capitalism shaped the development and growth of a Swazi working class. The capital penetration that took place in Swaziland after 1945 led to a very strong demand for local labour which in turn transformed the character of the working class and eventually led to the development of a Swazi labour movement. After the war

[240] Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of …", p. 47.

Britain needed the development of industries in colonial Africa to process raw materials which were then transported to Europe. As a result, Britain began to give outright grants to her colonies through the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, the Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) and the Colonial Development Cooperation (CDC) in 1948. CDC became one of the British corporations which spearheaded the development of industries Africa after 1945. The chapter resonates with Hamilton Simelane's argument that the economic changes that took place in Swaziland after the war should be conceptualized within the broader framework of changes in the economies of the metropole. The establishment of industries in Swaziland was part of the changing British colonial policy Africa after the war. The British government through CDC and the Overseas Development Act of 1948 sought to stimulate economic development in Swaziland after 1945. Between 1938 and 1960 a number of industries were established in Swaziland.

From inception, local companies faced a huge task of mobilizing an adequate labour force. These companies were immediately faced with a problem of labour shortage. The chapter has argued that shortage of labour for local companies was precipitated by a number of reasons. The migration of Swazi labour to work for South African companies contributed to the shortage of labour for local companies. By the time local companies were established both male and female workers were already migrating in large numbers to work in South Africa. Local companies had to compete for the remaining Swazi labour amongst themselves. In the 1950s the competition for Swazi labour intensified and Swazi workers manipulated it to their own advantage. Swazi workers preferred to work in the South African mines where wages were higher compared to those offered by local companies. This is a demonstration of a high level of awareness by Swazi workers who carefully chose South African companies ahead of local companies. Swazi workers were aware of the huge wage disparities between local and South African companies. This resonates with the works of scholars like Charles Van Onselen, Ian Phimister and Charles Perrings which argue that African workers demonstrated an intelligence system of making critical assessment of wages and working conditions in the different parts of the labour market. Swazi workers like their African counterparts carefully chose employment centers by making critical assessments of wages and ultimately went on to work for South African companies because they paid better than local companies.

Apart from having to deal workers preferring to work in South Africa rather than locally, local companies also had to grapple with the withdrawal of labour by their employees who were being enticed into working in South Africa. Stiff competition between local companies themselves also contributed to the shortage of labour among local companies. The chapter has also demonstrated that establishment of companies in the territory between 1938 and 1960 also increased demands for local labour. The fact that local companies had to scramble for a labour force that was already depleted by large numbers which preferred working in South Africa where wages were relatively higher, on its own, meant that local companies were faced with a momentous task of mobilizing an adequate labour force. Ultimately, local companies failed to recruit an adequate labour force and continued to be faced with labour shortages. Labour shortages among local companies were also caused by that Swazi workers during the 1950s were not yet fully dependent on the wage economy. They would withdraw their labour and remain in the villages to engage in farming. Withdrawal of labour during the ploughing season was also prevalent in colonial Kenya. This withdrawal of labour by the workers led to serious labour shortages among local companies. Further, shortage of labour among local companies was due to the fact that most Swazis remained in their village and continued to enjoy a degree of autonomy. Swazis had no economic compulsion to enter into wage labour during this period. This left local companies with a serious task of mobilizing a labour force and were subsequently faced with labour shortages. The demanding nature of the unskilled work which was done by Swazi workers contributed to labour shortages among local companies. Swazi workers were quick to individually withdraw their labour when working conditions proved unbearable. Nearly all the Swazi workers during the 1950s were not used to the demands of wage labour. They found the work difficult while the reward was insufficient. Complete withdrawal of labour resulted to critical labour shortages among local companies.

In response to these labour shortages, local companies adopted several strategies which, however, did not bear much fruits. Labour from the southern African region was imported to curb the problem of shortage of labour. Remarkably, Swazis continued to migrate to better paying jobs in South Africa. As a result, Swaziland became both an exporter and importer of labour. The importation of migrant labour did not solve the problem of shortage of labour. Local companies resorted to child and women labour. As a result, a sizeable number of women

and children were employed in the country's companies. In spite of the increasing number of women and children employed, labour shortages continued to rock local companies. This motivated local companies to connive with the Swazi traditional leadership to improve their recruitment efforts. Chief Recruiting Officers were allowed to carry out propaganda campaigns all over the country's chiefs' kraals. King Sobhuza II even motivated Swazis to work for local companies. This resonates with Hugh Macmillan's argument that King Sobhuza II used culture in an ideological and traditional power politics to exert control over the working class. In another effort, local companies appointed a Labour Officer to improve the recruitment process. Despite this recruitment effort local companies continued to face labour shortages. Consequently, wage increments were used to lure local labour. This wage increment should not be understood to mean that Swazi workers began to earn a fair income. Europeans earned far more compared to Africans. The huge wage disparity between Africans and Europeans caused problems for local companies in the early 1960s. Local companies also tried to use very high cash advances to lure Swazi labour. Cash advances favoured local companies to the disadvantage of foreign companies. Further, cash advances only benefited employers not recruited persons. It only helped employers tie down workers for a period of time. Cash advances slightly increased the number of recruited persons, however, it did not ultimately solve the problem of shortage of labour. The chapter has made an attempt to demonstrate that shortage of labour and recruitment strategies shaped the character of the working class and led to the development of a Swazi labour movement.

CHAPTER 4

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKER CONSCIOUSNESS IN SWAZILAND, 1939-1955

Introduction

This chapter examines how the development of worker consciousness contributed to the development of the Swazi labour movement. It argues that worker consciousness was a precursor for the development of the Swazi labour movement. Swazi workers demonstrated their consciousness through a variety of strategies which were changing over time. In spite of the exploitation that they suffered at the hands of capitalist companies, Swazi workers were able to devise and adopt several strategies to insulate themselves and created their own destiny. Ultimately, worker consciousness led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

The chapter begins by analysing the 1939 and 1944 Swazi and African workers' strikes at the Havelock Asbestos Mine. It builds on the argument by H.S. Simelane that through these strikes workers were resisting proletarianisation.[241] It goes on to argue that these strikes were a manifestation of consciousness by the workers. These strikes were the first noticeable workers' actions against the employer. Contrary to other strikes[242], these were not organised by a trade union. Trade unions did not emerge in Swaziland until 1962.[243] These strikes further contest the claims by colonial writers who equated worker consciousness to worker associations and trade unions. The chapter argues that at the root of these strikes were poor working and living conditions at the Havelock Asbestos Mine. Further, the chapter examines the development of worker consciousness among Swazi workers. The chapter also builds on Hlanze's study on the

[241] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…".

[242] The trend in other parts of the Southern African region and beyond was that strikes were organised by worker associations or trade unions. Theses strikes did not occur under the umbrella of neither a worker association nor a trade union.

[243] TOS, "First Swaziland Trade Union", 13 April 1962; *SwazilandAnnual Report for the Year 1962*, p. 5.

evolution of worker consciousness at Usuthu Pulp.[244] Hlanze's study is microscopicsince its focus is on the Usuthu Pulp Companyyet this chapter is at a 'macro-scope' level because it focuses on the development and evolution of worker consciousness in Swaziland with a particular focus on Swaziland's major industries rather than on an individual company. Hlanze's study limits our understanding of worker consciousness to one company, yet this chapter seeks to broaden our understanding of worker consciousness in Swaziland by exploring the country's major industries during the period under investigation. Worker consciousness in Swaziland manifested itself in many different forms which were changing over timer. Consequently, the chapter divides worker consciousness into early individual and group strategies by workers from 1939 to 1955.

Worker consciousness

African worker consciousness is one of the popular themes that has attracted the interest of a plethora of scholars from different perspectives. This has been in line with the general research trend on labour issues that has taken place in different parts of the Southern Africa region.[245] Unsurprisingly, the theme has also attracted the interest of several Swazi historians.[246] In spite of such a development very little research has been conducted to assist in the analysis of worker consciousness at the macro scope level in Swaziland. Only fragment studies have been conducted on individual companies in the country. Such an approach, though useful, limits our understanding of worker consciousness to these individual companies. Further, there is a great danger of making general assumptions about worker consciousness in Swaziland based on empirical evidence from one or few industries. There is a greater need, therefore, to conduct a study that will broaden our understanding at national level by comparing worker consciousness at the different major industries. This will help get empirical evidence to provide a broader analysis of worker consciousness in Swaziland. The chapter incorporates the approach of social

[244] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…".

[245] See for instance, Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 5.

[246] See for instance, Simelane, *Colonialism;* Simelane, "Capital Penetration …"; Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development…"; Fransman, "The State and Development in Swaziland…"; Simelane, "The State and the Working Class…"; Dlamini, "Race Relations in Swaziland…"; Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…"; Mamba, "A Social History of a Swazi Labour Market…"; Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…".

historians to trace the history of workers' activities in Swaziland from the perspectives and experiences of the workers themselves. Worker consciousness is the awareness by workers that they have certain interests (whether as individuals or groups) and are exploited by the employer. Upon realizing that they are exploited by their employer workers then devise several strategies to insulate themselves from the exploitation.

For a long time African worker consciousness has been the focus of various scholars. Early scholars have equated African worker consciousness to the emergence of worker associations such as trade unions.[247] As a result, such scholars have denied worker consciousness before the emergence of worker associations such as trade unions. These scholars begin to see consciousness among African workers until at least the 1920s when trade unions emerged in Africa. Radical/neo-Marxists, on the other hand have contested this argument by colonial scholars and demonstrated worker consciousness among African workers even before the emergence of trade unions.[248] However, their emphasis has been on the conflict between labour and capital, thus they presented African workers as victims of exploitation from colonial capital. Social historians, on the other hand, have shown that African worker consciousness manifested itself in many forms including the importation of traditional cultural values.[249] The usefulness and relevance of the approaches of radical/neo-Marxists and social historians cannot be overstated. The chapter has incorporated into its framework the approach of social historians and argues that worker consciousness among Swazi workers manifested itself indifferent strategies which were evolving over time. This chapter argues that worker consciousness in Swaziland developed and evolved through the strategies that were adopted and devised by the workers to insulate themselves from the exploitative, manipulative and coercive measures at the hands of a capitalist companies and state. Such an approach is premised on the notion that in spite of the exploitation that workers were exposed to they managed to respond through ways better understood by themselves.

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[247] See for instance, Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 102; Hooker, "The African Worker in Southern Rhodesia...", p. 142; Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, p. 76.

[248] See for instance, Van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness…"; Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of…".

[249] See for instance, Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity;* Penvenne, *African Workers*..

Workers tend to respond to exploitation through withdrawal of labour. As a consequence, labour withdrawal is an expression of worker consciousness. When workers are aware of the importance of their labour to capital and are unhappy with working and living conditions and wages they withdraw their labour. Withdrawal of labour in Swaziland manifested itself in different forms and developed and changed over time. Labour withdrawal included early forms which were both individual and group oriented.[250] arly labour withdrawals can be divided into complete and partial withdrawals. To the companies and colonial officials, complete withdrawal of labour was understood as 'desertion' while partial withdrawal was construed as 'loafing' and 'absenteeism'. Labour withdrawal was common among workers who had spent a short time together and were not housed in compounds. Such workers could not immediately share their experiences and grievances with each other. They thus acted individually to rescue themselves from exploitation. On the contrary, workers who were housed together in compounds tended to share their experiences and grievances with each other. Such workers acted in groups to rescue themselves from any form of exploitation. Early individual withdrawal of labour was largely informed by the economic needs of workers who joined the companies to improve their economic position. When workers were paid meagre wages, they adopted certain strategies such as withdrawal of labour.[251] In a similar way the chapter seeks to demonstrate that Swazi workers who joined the companies for the first time without previous experience tended to express their dissatisfaction in early individual forms of labour withdrawal. Mostly, their only concern was to obtain high wages. The complete withdrawal of labour during the early periods of wage employment was informed by the fact that some workers were not fully proletarianised while others migrated to work in South Africa.

It is argued in this chapter that worker consciousness develops as workers live together and share their grievances in compounds built by the companies to control African labour.[252] The chapter seeks to demonstrate that in Swaziland, in particular at Havelock Mine, as workers stayed together in the compounds, even though they were not meant to help them, awareness developed

[250] See for instance, Van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness…"; Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of…"; Simelane, *Colonialism*.

[251] See for instance, Zapata, Bizberg and Roxborough, "Worker Consciousness and Union Orientation:…", p. 121.

[252] See for instance, Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 177.

to facilitate togetherness and they strategized on how to end their exploitation.[253] Thus, the chapter also frames itself against the backdrop of group solidarity. The focus on group solidarity is based on the 1939 and 1944 strikes that rocked the Havelock Asbestos Mine. These strikes demonstrate the Swazi labour movement's commonality as well as exceptionality since they were not organised by a worker association or trade union. The strikes also demonstrate group consciousness amongst African workers at the mine. This refutes the argument by colonial scholars that worker consciousness is only measured through worker associations such as trade unions. It demonstrates that worker associations such as trade unionsshould not be used as the only yardstick to measure consciousness among workers. Further, it demonstrates that workers were capable of organizing themselves without the aid of a trade union. The chapter further argues that workers who enter into wage labour with education and experience from previous employment tend to mobilise and help raise awareness among other workers probably because of their long exposure to the work environment. This group of workers tends to lead in challenging management for any form of ill-treatment and unfairness.[254] Worker consciousness among such workers was informed by the fact the workers were becoming semi-proletarianised.[255] They were becomingmore dependent on wage labour.[256]

Strike Action without a trade union? The 1939 and 1944 African workers' strikes at Havelock Asbestos Mine

Hardly a year after it was opened the Havelock Asbestos Mine was soon rocked by two strikes by Swazi and other African workers in 1939 in a space of one month.[257] Again, in 1944 Swazi and other African workers at the mine were on strike.[258] Between 1939 and 1944 the newly established Havelock Asbestos Mine witnessed three major strikes by its Swazi and other

[253] See for instance, Simelane, "The State and the Working Class…", pp. 108-112.

[254]See for instance, Zapata, Bizberg and Roxborough, "Worker Consciousness and Union Orientation…", p. 21.

[255] See for instance, Sticher, "The Formation…", p. 22.

[256] See for instance, Burchielli, "The Purpose of Trade Union Values…", p. 137.

[257] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…"

[258] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…"; TOS, "The Havelock Riot", 10 February, 1944.

African workforce. Jonathan Crush[259] has analysed the 1944 strike at Havelock Asbestos Mine arguing that it was a conflict over control of beer production and drinking. H.S. Simelane[260] has also analysed the 1939 and 1944 strikes and concluded that through these strikes Swazi and other African workers were resisting proletarianisation while also demonstrating peasant consciousness. The aim of this chapter is not to reiterate Crush's or Simelane's theses, but to show how these strikes, in addition to resistance to proletarianisation and demonstration of peasant consciousness, were a manifestation of worker consciousness. Figure 1 below shows a photograph of Havelock Asbestos Mine while figure 2 shows the position of Havelock Asbestos Mine on a political map of Swaziland.

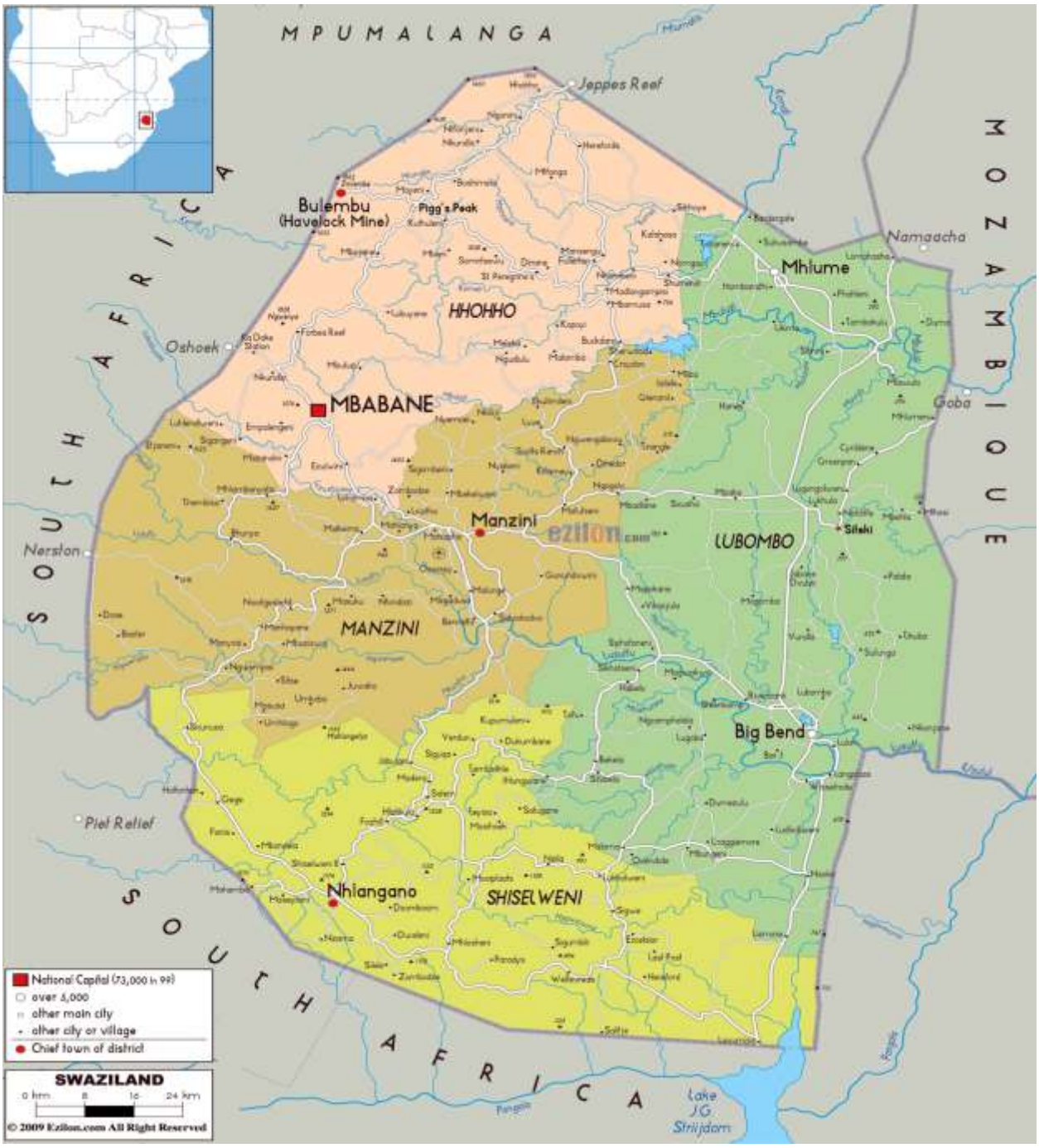
Figure 1. A photograph showing the Havelock Asbestos Mine

Source*: www.ozouback.com*

[259] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…".

[260] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…"

Figure 2. A map showing the position of Havelock Asbestos Mine in Bulembu, North-Western Swaziland



Source*: www.ezilon.com*

As H.S. Simelane argues, by 1939 the Havelock Asbestos Mine "was the most highly capitalized and labour intensive mine in the country."[261] The mine comprised of Swazi, Mozambican, Zulu, Sotho and Nyasa workers as well as white expatriates. Despite the sizeable number of several African nationalities in the mine Swazi workers remained a majority in the mine.[262] Most of the foreign workers used the Havelock Asbestos Mine as a stepping stone to the South African Mines where wages were higher compared to those offered in the country. This resonates with the argument by Radical/neo-Marxist scholars that African workers demonstrated consciousness by making critical assessments of wages and working conditions in the different parts of the labour market. They eventually chose employment centers that paid relatively higher wages.[263] By stopping by and working in the country before leaving to work in South Africa, foreign African immigrant workers sought to gain experience which would help them get employment in supervisory positions. The Swazi, Nyasa and Mozambican labour force at the mine also comprised of workers who had mine experience which they had acquired at the Witwatersrand mines.[264] This also demonstrates that the flow of African labour was not always one way; other workers, once they have acquired experience in the South African mines, took the opposite direction. This occurred mainly when the new employment center had relatively equal or better living and conditions, such as the Havelock Asbestos Mine. Apart from the few African workers with mine experience, the majority of the African workforce lacked mine or industrial experience. They came from a peasant rural background where beer drinking was an integral part of their culture and societal practice. Thus, the majority of the workers that were recruited to work at Havelock Asbestos Mine were fresh from a peasant environment where patriarchy and uncontrolled beer drinking was a societal norm.[265]

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[261] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 6.

[262] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…",pp. 7-8.

[263] See for instance, Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness…"; Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of African…"; Van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Illife, "The Creation of Group Consciousness…"; Ranger, *The African Voice*.

[264] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…".

[265] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 8.

By February 1944 the number of African workers employed at the mine had risen sharply to a total of 2, 373. There were about 108 white workers. In addition, there were about 1, 500 people living in the mine property who were relatives of both white and African workers in the mine.[266] From the beginning the mine had planned to accommodate skilled and supervisory African workers in settled accommodation. In its efforts to entice African labour the mine believed that family housing was a powerful recruitment tool. This worked to the advantage of the mine as married Swazi workers who had previously worked at the Witwatersrand mines found living conditions at Havelock more favourable. They were now working in their own country and closer to their homes and families and friends. By the mid-1940s the mine village had about 260 semi-detached houses for married workers and their families. Single workers were accommodated in an attached open compound in single-sex, ethnically segregated dormitories. The mine applied the 'divide and rule' approach from the outset. An ethnically segregated workforce was deliberately employed in order to diffuse worker solidarity. Further, foreign migrant workers were also not susceptible to the lure of cultural, ceremonial and communal activity that local workers were most vulnerable to. This was beneficial to the mine especially during the period when local workers were attending cultural, ceremonial and communal activities. Thus, by the mid-1940s Swazi, Mozambican and Nyasa workers were not only employed roughly on equal proportions[267] but also accommodated in separate ethnic townships.[268] According to Moses Sabelo Mlipha, at Havelock Asbestos Mine there were different townships named according to nationality. For instance, there was Blantyre Township for the Nyasa workers which was named after the Malawian Town Blantyre. There was also Shangaan Township named after the nationality of the Mozambican nationals. Swazi workers were not allocated a specific township but were all over the mine compounds since they were a majority and were working in their own country.[269] The photograph below shows a section of

[266] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", p. 375.

[267] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", p. 375.

[268] Interview with Moses Sabelo Mlipha, Mpaka, 14 April, 2018; see also TOS, "The Havelock Riot", 2 March, 1944.

[269] Interview with Moses Sabelo Mlipha, Mpaka, 14 April, 2018; see also TOS, "The Havelock Riot", 2 March, 1944.

semi-detached houses for skilled African workers and their families at the Havelock Asbestos Mine.

Figure 3. A photograph showing accommodation for African workers at Havelock Asbestos Mine

Source: *www.mg.co.za*

Living conditions appeared to be better compared to those in other local companies. According to Jonathan Crush, management at Havelock offered welfare benefits to make life easier at the mine. Amenities such as a mine hospital, adequate storm drainage, and latrines with waterborne sewerage and food rations were provided by the company. Further, the company ensured that all its African labour force affiliated in the mine's Native Welfare Society which organised many different entertainment games attained from membership dues and mine beer hall. The company went as far as building a soccer filed for its workers and provided a team bus for away matches. Also, there was a "large recreation hall close to the compound and showed free films every weekend to workers and their families."[270] Below is a photograph of the cinema hall at the mine.

[270] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", pp. 375-376.

Figure 4. A photograph showing a cinema hall for African workers at Havelock Asbestos Mine

Source: *www.avforums.co.za*

The mine realized that it had to devise a strategy to retain its labour force during a period of labour shortages. Most Swazi workers during this period preferred migrating to work in the South African mines where wages were relatively higher than those offered locally. To retain its labour force the mine offered entertainment and welfare amenities to Swazi workers and their families.

How could the embryonic Swazi labour and other African labour organise a number of strikes without the assistance of a trade union? Were these strikes a manifestation of worker consciousness or resistance to proletarianisation or both? Clearly, these strikes were not organised by a trade union. To a large extent, the strikes were a demonstration of group solidarity on the part of the workers. The chapter builds on H.S. Simelane's argument that these strikes were a manifestation of peasant consciousness and resistance to proletarianisation. It acknowledges that beer drinking was deeply embedded in Swazi and African culture and societal norms. The fact that the workers at Havelock Mine were still attached to the rural economy is a

clear indication that these workers were semi-proletarianised. They had one foot in wage employment and another in the rural areas where they maintained strong economic and social links. It is unsurprising, therefore, that between 1939 and 1944 Swazi and other African workers in the mine were involved in numerous conflicts with the mine management over beer drinking. For instance, on 28 February, 1939 approximately 500 Nyasa workers went on strike in protest against the dismissal of their countryman, Duncan, who was allegedly dismissed for selling traditional beer in the compound. Again, on 13 March, 1939 about 1, 000 Swazi and Mozambican workers went on strike in protest against being forced to buy and drink beer from the mine's beer hall. On 2 February, 1944 beer was once again at the center of another strike by Swazi and Mozambican workers.[271] The workers' protests against the mine's negative attitude towards beer drinking clearly indicate resistance to proletarianisation on the one hand and peasant consciousness on the other hand. As already argued above beer drinking was deeply embedded in Swazi and African culture. Denying them the chance to drink traditional beer was tantamount to divorcing them from their culture. As T.D. Moodie and V. Ndatshe argue, to most African men alcohol was a very important part of African sociability.[272] Colonial officials and employers misconstrued the pattern of beer drinking among the Swazi and concluded that the Swazi were the heaviest beer drinkers in the Southern African region.[273]

From another perspective the 1939 and 1944 strikes at the mine were a clear demonstration of worker consciousness among the African workers. These group of workers began to see themselves as workers with common interests. Thus, they understood the importance of group solidarity as a bargaining tool to champion their demands at the hands of a capitalist company. The fact that these workers decided to engage on strikes instead of packing their bags and leaving the companyand tried to address their grievances is testimony to the fact that they were conscious of their status as workers. Elsewhere in Africa, John Illife argues that group consciousness among the Dockworkers of Dar es Salaam was created by the workers themselves

[271] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 8.

[272] T.D. Moodie and V. Ndatshe, Men, *Mines and Migration: Going for Gold* (London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 164.

[273] J. Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority: Drinking at Havelock, 1938-1944" in: J. Crush and C. Ambler (Eds.) *Liquor and Labour in Southern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), p. 366.

through their actions and it emanated from the nature of work which these workers were involved in.[274] The workers were aware of the importance of their labour to capital. Thus, when they were unhappy with working and living conditions they withdrew their labour, albeit en masse. It should be remembered that during the early years of the conflict between labour and capital a very common practice among Swazi and other African workers was simply to pack their bags and leave the company without a warning to the employers. These workers wanted to continue working at the mine but wanted their grievances addressed as workers.

Further, the strikes demonstrate that workers met on the eve of the strikes to plan on how to execute these strikes. These workers spent time together and were housed in compounds thus they could immediately share their experiences and grievances with each other. It is argued in this chapter that worker consciousness develops as workers live together and share their grievances in compounds built by the companies to control African labour. On the 2nd February, 1944 strike, for instance, a meeting was held at Sebanette Ngobeni's house on the eve of the strike. Workers such as July Sangweni and James Shabangu went around the compounds mobilising other workers to join a meeting at Ngobeni's house. Eventually, there were more workers in Ngobeni's house and they were addressed by July Sangweni.[275] "During the night of the meeting in Ngobeni's house Manuel Sibuyi and Antoni Mhlanga went around all the houses occupied by the Swazi and Shangaan [workers] telling people to join the strike. As they moved from house to house the crowd following them grew bigger and bigger."[276] This also indicates that workers exploited the compounds which were meant to control them to their own advantage. The mine management built the compounds in order to exert control over their African labour force. Unfortunately, the workers exploited the compounds to champion their own interests, much to the dismay of the mine management. Similarly, African workers exploited the compounds to discuss their grievances and plan solutions to their problems in Kimberley.[277]

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[274] Illife, "The Creation of Group Consciousness…".

[275] TOS, "Havelock Mine Riot", 9 March, 1944; see also Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", pp. 10-11.

[276] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 11. See also Moodie and Ndatshe, Men, *Mines and Migration,* p. 381.

[277] Turrell, "Kimberley…", pp. 50-54.

Further, through the strikes workers demonstrated a high level of organisation. That they were able to organise strikes without the aid of a trade union demonstrates that these workers were able to organise themselves and mount successful strike action. This rejects the notion by earliest scholars who denied consciousness among African workers before the advent trade unions in Africa.[278] It supports the notion by radical neo-Marxists scholars[279] and social historians[280] that African workers demonstrated their consciousness in different strategies understood only by them in response to poor working and living conditions and low wages.

A salient aspect about the strikes was their ethnic content. In the 28 February 1939 strike, for instance, about 500 Nyasa workers went on strike in protest against a dismissal of a fellow countryman, Duncan, who was apparently fired for selling traditional beer in the compound. The Nyasa workers were acting in solidarity with their fellow national and demanded his reinstatement. Despite that the Nyasa workers did not succeed in forcing the mine management to reinstate their compatriot, their support suggests that they sympathized with him. Further, the failure by the Swazi and Mozambican workers to show unity in support of another African worker suggests that there was ethnic peculiarism as African labour at the mine was organised along ethnic lines. The February 1944 strike by Swazi and Mozambican workers also demonstrates the salient ethnic aspect among African workers at the mine. Only Swazi and Mozambican workers participated in this strike. "Mine workers from Nyasaland were neither asked nor expected to participate…strikes of that nature did not involve everybody, they were like family issues, they involved only those directly affected by the incident."[281]

On 13 March, 1939 another strike broke out at the mine. During this strike about 1, 000 Swazi and Mozambican workers withdrew their labour and did not go to work. Beer was again the

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[278] See for instance, Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 102; Hooker, "The African Worker in Southern Rhodesia...", p. 142; Gann and Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia*, p. 76.

[279] See for instance, Van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness…"; Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of…".

[280] See for instance, Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity;* Penvenne, *African Workers*; Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…".

[281] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", p. 382.

main bone of contention. The mine had just built a beer hall on its property as a way of controlling beer drinking on the part of the African workers. The other objective was to curb absenteeism on Mondays since many Swazi and other African workers were in "gaol and intoxicated."[282] Speaking of African workers and beer drinking T.D. Moodie and V. Ndatshe argue, "not only were many workers drunk or hung over when they reported to work on Monday morning. Others did not show up at all because of their arrest in town for liquor offences."[283] However, the beer hall was not just built for controlling beer drinking and curbing absenteeism on 'Saint Monday' but it was also built to accumulate more capital for mine management. As Hamilton Simelane puts it, "it was built to induce workers to spend most of their wages on company-produced beer; thus ploughing their wages back into the coffers of the company."[284] For instance, when beer hall profits began to fall, the compound manager, Herbert Johnson, started a systematic attack on illegal brewing in the compounds. He began raiding the compounds himself and made the mine police personally accountable for beer found in their sections.[285]

The building of the beer hall was also geared towards achieving increased productivity at the mine, thus increasing capital and profits for the mine. Controlling beer drinking and curbing absenteeism among workers, in mine management thinking, was one way of weaning workers from alcohol and making them become regular contented workers. As Charles Ambler and Jonathan Crush argue, mine management in Kimberley controlled beer drinking among African migrants by giving workers a tot of Cape Brandy per day, thereafter no beer was allowed at all. They were imprisoned in the compounds and denied access to beer drinking and were allegedly weaned from alcohol and became 'disciplinedand reliable' workers.[286] African workers at Havelock Mine were expected to be regular customers at the beer hall. However, the workers

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[282] C. Ambler andJ. Crush, "Alcohol in Southern African Labour History" in: J. Crush and C. Ambler (Eds.) *Liquor and Labour in Southern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), p. 17.

[283] Moodie and Ndatshe, *Men, Mines and Migration,* p. 174.

[284] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 9.

[285] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", pp. 385-386.

[286] Ambler and Crush, "Alcohol in Southern African…", p.17.

were not happy with the fact that they were forced to buy beer from the mine's beer hall. Drinking beer in the beer hall had some disadvantages for the workers. First, beer drinking at the beer hall was controlled because the beer hall closed at 7p.m. everyday. To the workers this was a violation of their rights, freedom of movement and association as workers. The workers saw themselves as essentially wage earners rather than as farmers striving to put food on the table for their rural homesteads. Many workers hated the idea of being subjected to a drinking timetable. Second, the beer that was produced in the beer hall was not as good as the beer that was sold in the neighbouring homesteads. According to Jonathan Crush, the beer that was sold in the beer hall was compromised. It had a high nutritional value and low alcohol content. This was aimed at increasing productivity and forcing the workers to stop drinking the strong beer from nearby homesteads. Jonathan Crush states, for instance, that the Havelock Mine "began handing out rations and selling diluted *tshwala*."[287] Workers instead, preferred drinking beer in the neighbouring homesteads. Traditionally, beer in the shebeens was served by women. The workers preferred to drink beer that was produced and served by women. Beer drinking was viewed by African workers as an important aspect of sociability. Also, it was in the shebeens that many discussions and important decisions were taken. Mine management failed to acknowledge that migrant workers brought to compound life a set of practices and social meanings that were deeply rooted in communal and societal life.

Despite the mine's policy to control and regulate beer drinking African workers devised ways and strategies understood only by them to respond to the mine's policies. As Jonathan Crush argues, "for their part, workers jealously guarded what they saw as their right to drink what they chose whenever it was available."[288] Thus, when mine management made concerted efforts to control the quality, quantity, and place of drinking, the workers protested. Through the strikes African workers at Havelock were responding in ways understood by them towards capital regulatory regimes imposed upon them. As Dunbar Moodie and Vivian Ndatshe argue for gold miners in South Africa, "despite the state's policy of total prohibition for Africans, black miners

[287] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", pp. 377-378.

[288] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", pp. 377-378

tenaciously insisted upon alcohol as a necessary accompaniment for informal sociability."[289] Consequently, many African migrants who adhered to mine rules admitted to illegal drinking. Most mine workers found ducking out prohibition laws to be an interesting game and a source of many business opportunities on and around the compounds. Besides illegal beer drinking in the compounds, some workers decided to brew beer for themselves and their counterparts even though the brewing and serving of beer was traditionally a female role. This is a clear demonstration of the different strategies that were adopted by African workers in the compounds to insulate themselves from the exploitative and manipulative tendencies from a capitalist company. This resonates with Dunbar Moodie and Vivian Ndatshe's argument that beer drinking never stopped among African workers despite laws prohibiting it. Instead, compound brewing and beer drinking remained an important aspect of the miners' lives.[290] It is unsurprising, therefore, that the immediate causes of the February, 1939 and 1944 strikes centered on the dismissal and suspension of workers for violating prohibition laws. For instance, in February 1939 Duncan, a Nyasa worker, was allegedly dismissed for selling beer in the compound designated for Nyasa workers. In February 1944 the mine suspended some Swazi and Shangaan *Tindvuna* for allegedly deliberately neglecting their duties and failing to report workers who trafficked beer into the compounds from the neighbouring homesteads and drinking spots. The workers' strikes demonstrate the integrity with which these migrant working African men, despite the strict controls they were subjected to, retained their senses of identity. They also demonstrate how African workers have responded to their work situation and exploitation.

Apart from challenging prohibition of beer in the mine, workers also went on strike because they despised the treatment they received from the compound manager, Herbert Johnson. The strikers filed a list of grievances against Mr. Johnson. For instance,workers described him as very arrogant. It also appeared to the workers that he did not like African people, a very common practice among whites at the time. For instance, it is alleged that he called African workers 'boys' when addressing them despite that many workers were older than him. During the strike he is alleged to have called the workers fools for staging the strike and promised them flogging if

[289] Moodie and Ndatshe, *Men, Mines and Migration,* p. 159.

[290] Moodie and Ndatshe, *Men, Mines and Migration,* p. 161.

they continued with the strike.[291] This angered the strikers who began hurling insults and throwing stones at him. He tried to run away from the strikers but they eventually caught up with him striking him with a stick in one leg. The strikers dragged him on the ground and mine camp. He was eventually saved by a gun firing from the dump.[292] The strikers were eventually calmed down by the arrival of the police.[293] Clearly, the workers' grievances had gone beyond challenging ill-treatment at the mine to challenging the white superiority over blacks that was prevalent in colonial Swaziland and Africa at large.

Despite that the workers' grievances were not the usual broad-ranging attack on wages and general conditions at the mine, evidence does suggests that working and living conditions at the mine were far from perfect. Through the strikes workers were challenging the ill-treatment that they received from mine management. In late 1943, for instance, Herbert Johnson began to introduce fines for workers who were 'loafing' and gave a stern warning that any worker who would be caught shirking would be flogged.[294] This suggests that working conditions at the mine were difficult for some workers, thus they resorted to 'loafing' to insulate themselves from the harsh working conditions they were experiencing. Further, living conditions may have been poor for some workers at the mine. From Johnson's testimony on administering corporal punishment to workers at the mine, it appears food rations were not enough for some workers as they devised ways to obtain more than one meat ration while others changed work tickets.[295] These strategies that were adopted by the workers at the mine to insulate themselves from harsh working and living conditions that they were subjected to suggest consciousness among these workers.

[291] See for instance, Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", pp. 383-385; Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 11.

[292] TOS, "Havelock Mine Riot", 9 March, 1944.

[293] Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action…", p. 12.

[294] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", p. 385.

[295] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", p. 385.

The workers were able to get some concessions from the mine management. For instance, the Swazi workers demanded the presence of King Sobhuza II during the negotiations. Even though King Sobhuza did not personally attend the negotiations, he did send three high-ranking members of the Swazi Council (Liqoqo) to mediate on his behalf. Culturally, a king's representative is recognized as the king himself. That the members of the Swazi Council were rushed from Mbabane to the mine in a car hired by the mine management demonstrates that the workers were in the driving seat, dictating terms. After prolonged negotiations the workers refused to resume work before their grievances were addressed. Further, despite Johnson's long history with the company, he was eventually transferred to Shabani in September 1945, on the workers' orders.[296]

Early individual forms of labour withdrawal, 1939-1955

Apart from engaging in group solidarity as demonstrated with the Havelock Asbestos Mine strikes of 1939 and 1944 Swazi workers also resorted to individual strategies to insulate themselves from the exploitative and manipulative tendencies of capitalist companies. Between 1950 and 1954 Swazi workers expressed their consciousness mostly through early forms of individual labour withdrawal. Poor working and living conditions as well as low wages were at the root of worker consciousness during this period. This chapter investigates how the workers during this period responded to poor working and living conditions and meagre wages at the country's major companies in the absence of structures to deal with workers' grievances, and without the aid of trade unions. Swazi workers resorted to early individual forms of labour withdrawal to respond to meagre wages and harsh, appalling working conditions. Despite that full individual withdrawal of labour was the most common form of early worker consciousness during this period, partial individual withdrawal of labour was also prevalent among Swazi workers particularly during the ploughing season. These early individual forms of labour withdrawal led to constant labour shortages for local industries especially during the 1950s. This led to the labour officer, P.R. Forsyth Thompson, concluding in the 1950s that "Swazi workers were not given to complaint if they had grievances preferring instead to pack up their bags and

[296] Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", pp. 382-388.

go home."[297] To company and colonial officials alike, early individual forms of labour withdrawal were a clear indication of the failure by Swazi labourers to adapt to industrial life.

Early scholars of the African labour market such as Lewis H. Gann[298] have denied worker consciousness among African workers before the emergence of trade unions in the 1920s. Their argument was premised on the fact that, across colonial Africa, local employees created neither worker associations nor trade unions until at least the 1920s. These scholars equated worker consciousness with worker associations and trade unions. In their analysis, they overlooked other forms of worker consciousness such as early individual forms of labour withdrawal. This chapter insists that early individual forms of labour withdrawal were a manifestation of worker consciousness among Swazi workers. The development of worker consciousness among Swazi workers is discussed against the background of appalling working and living conditions which were accompanied by inadequate wages, to which the Swazi workers were exposed.

Difficult, unfamiliar conditions and low wages were at the root of early individual forms of labour withdrawal among Swazi workers. Most Swazi workers were not familiar with the demands of mine, timber and the sugar industries. The tasks of the timber industries, for instance, often involved felling and transporting the timber in sloppy, muddy areas using mules or donkeys to nearby feeder roads where timber trucks could transport them. Such work was very demanding for the newly recruited Swazi workers, particularly if we consider the large areas that were bought by these companies. The photographs below show a timber worker at Usuthu Forests transporting felled timber using a donkey to a nearby feeder road and the one on the next page shows a sloppy area where timber was felled and transported to a nearby feeder road at Peak Timbers.

[297] SNA, File 3094, Notes of P.R. Forsyth Thompson, Labour Officer, 10 December 1957. For the period under investigation, for any usage of government documents, the study relied on the reports of the Labour Officer for 1957 and 1960. Since in the period preceding 1957 there was no Labour Officer in Swaziland, most of the issues captured in this report reflect working conditions and workers' responses from 1939 to 1956.

[298] See for instance, Gann, *A History*.

Figure 5. A photograph showing a timber worker at Usuthu Pulp transporting felled timber using a donkey to a nearby feeder road.

Source: *www.alarmy.com*

Figure 6. A photograph showing a sloppy area where timber was felled and transported to a nearby feeder road at Peak Timbers Limited

Source: *www.alarmy.com*

The most prevalent form of early individual form of labour withdrawal during the early to the mid-1950s was complete individual labour withdrawal. Even the Labour Officer, P.R. Forsyth-Thompson substantiated this argument when he observed that most Swazi workers in the 1950s preferred completely withdrawing their labour individually than complaining to management when they were unsatisfied with the conditions of work.[299] This was precipitated by several factors. One of the factors is that during the early to the mid-1950s there were no laid down structures that were put in place for workers to place their grievances. In the absence of such structures workers simply withdrew their labour without giving notice to management. The workers were aware of the importance of their labour to capital. They worked very hard, however, their wages were insufficient to the effort that they were putting.

During the 1950s Swazi workers were needed for unskilled jobs which comprised mostly of manual work. In the case of the timber industries, for instance, unskilled Swazi labour was initially employed for an intensive tree planting programme and site development. Some workers were deployed to work in the nurseries planting and watering seedlings. Others were employed to clear the area which was to be planted by cutting indigenous trees using slashes, bush knives and axes.[300] These kinds of work were very demanding, particularly if we consider the large areas that had been bought by the companies for afforestation purposes. Further, workers were given very high daily targets to meet. For instance, at Gege Forest Block, one of Usuthu Pulp's forest sites, workers were expected to prune at least 70 trees per day in 1954. This was a very difficult task for the workers because they used axes to chop off all tree branches flush with the trunk. None of the workers were able to meet the required daily target. Since the workers found the task too demanding most of them left at the end of each month after receiving their wages.[301]

In the sugar-belt companies workers had to grapple with irrigation, weeding and cutting large areas of sugar-cane at high speed. The photograph on the next page shows a sugar-cane cutter at

[299] SNA, File 3904W, Notes of P.R. Forsyth-Thompson, Labour Officer, 10 February 1957.

[300] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 44-45.

[301] SNA, File 3094W, Notes of a Visiting Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Gege Forest Block, 26 August, 1960.

Ubombo Ranches executing his duties. This was another difficult task for Swazi workers. Dr. Hendrick van Eck, one of founders of Ubombo Ranches noted that Swazi labour was problematic. He was quoted saying "the Swazis are very prosperous, as good grazing is available for their cattle. With a few exceptions they only look for work when they are in need of ready cash and then only stay for a few months. The permanent labour force consists mostly of Shangaans."[302] This not only reiterates the Labour Officer's observations that Swazi workers were unreliable and inefficient[303] but also suggests that Swazi workers were not yet fully proletarianised by the mid-1950s. They were not fully dependent on wage labour as they still lived on the environment. Further, it demonstrates that Swazi workers were aware of the value of their labour to capital thus when they were not satisfied with working conditions they individually withdrew their labour.

Figure 7. A photograph showing a sugar-cane cutter at Ubombo Ranches

Source: *www.alarmy.com*

[302] Gosnell, *Big Bend*, pp. 149-158.

[303] SNA File, 3094W, Notes of P.R. Forsyth Thompson, Labour Officer, 10 December 1957.

The complete individual withdrawal of labour demonstrates consciousness among the workers. They were not happy with the conditions of work as they were being overworked, and yet the wages were not commensurate with their work load. Thus, they left their work because they could not see the rewards of working under difficult conditions since the companies paid them low wages.

Further, newly recruited workers were not given an 'acclimatization' period at a guaranteed minimum wage. Workers at Usuthu Forests, for instance, found tasks such as pruning very arduously. When wages for doing such arduous work were unsatisfactory the workers completely withdrew their labour, albeit individually.[304] Evidence indicates, however, that the high turnover of workers at the company decreased when it began offering its workers a minimum wage irrespective of whether or not they had finished their tasks, thus decreasing complete individual labour withdrawal.[305] Complete individual labour withdrawal sharply decreased when the company introduced a guaranteed minimum wage for its workers. They continued to work for the company despite that the work was difficult. The guaranteed minimum wage motivated them to stay on at the company.[306] This not only demonstrates an awareness by the workers but also their ability, albeit individually, to champion their grievances to the management of the company as well as influence it to introduce a period of 'acclimatization' at a guaranteed minimum wage. The impact of the complete individual withdrawal of labour by its workers was huge at the company, thus it subsequently reviewed its policy of not offering an 'acclimatization' period at a minimum wage.

Further, the case of the Havelock Asbestos Mine demonstrates clearly that when wages were satisfactory and living conditions better, workers stayed on their jobs even if working conditions were difficult. The workers were aware that working underground was a difficult and dangerous job but were motivated to work under such conditions since the wages were satisfactory to them and living conditions were better than anywhere else in the territory. Thus, during the 1950s

[304] SNA, File 3094W, Notes of a Visiting Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Gege Forest Block, 26 August, 1960.

[305] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 48-49.

[306] See also, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 48-49.

there is no evidence to prove that the mine was confronted with complete individual labour withdrawal.

The photograph below demonstrates the actual difficult and dangerous conditions underground at the Havelock Asbestos Mine. Better wages and living conditions helped the mine to retain its workforce despite that working underground was a difficult and dangerous job.

Figure 8. A photograph showing underground conditions at the Havelock Asbestos Mine.

Source: *Swaziland National Trust Commission.*

Another factor which precipitated complete individual labour withdrawal was that during this period in most companies Swazi labour had not yet developed to the level of exploiting the compounds to discuss their experiences and devise strategies on how to deal with their challenges.[307] Most local companies had not yet fully accommodated their African labour force in the compounds and houses. Only the Havelock Mine was fully accommodating African workers during this period, thus they were able to share their grievances and organise strikes in 1939 and 1944. Even though, by 1955 Usuthu Forests had built extensive compounds to

[307] The Havelock Asbestos Mine is an exception. Newly recruited workers manipulated the compounds and organised strikes challenging poor working and living conditions.

accommodate approximately 3, 000 workers, consciousness among Swazi workers at the company had not yet developed to a level of sharing their grievances and plotting how to overcome their challenges. It was only after 1955 that Swazi workers at the company began exploiting the compounds to share their grievances and planned how to insulate themselves from harsh working and living conditions and low wages.[308] Swazi labour, therefore, acted individually and completely or partially withdrew their labour.

Furthermore, during this period most Swazi workers were aware that the South African mines offered better working and living conditions including competitive wages. Thus, when they were unhappy with conditions of work, they totally withdrew their labour and left local companies to earn more money working for the South African mines.[309] Heavily linked to this factor is the payment of low wages to Swazi workers during the 1950s. Hamilton Simelane, explaining the payment of low wages to Swazi workers argues that employers in Swaziland generally held the view that Swazi workers were inferior to their European counterparts since they viewed them as "lazy, unclean, unskilled and inclined to drunkenness, absenteeism and crime."[310] This interpretation of Swazi workers was very instrumental in the way in which capitalists employers treated Swazi workers.[311] Hlanze argues that the poor wages paid to Swazi workers were meant to minimize costs and maximize profits for the capitalist companies. Thus, Swazi workers were viewed as a source of cheap, unskilled labour through which the capitalist companies could minimize costs and maximize profits.[312] According to the Wiehahn Report, employers in Swaziland were encouraged by the absence of a policy to regulate wages within the colony leaving the payment of wages to local workers to the discretion of individual employers. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, any attempts by the colonial government to regulate wages were rejected by employers citing adverse economic effects on the economic development of

[308] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 177.

[309] See for instance, Booth, "Capitalism and Competition for…", p. 126; Simelane, "A Historical Discussion…", pp. 15-35; Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 42.

[310] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 201.

[311] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 201.

[312] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 51-52.

their companies. Even the Resident Commissioner did not have any jurisdiction over the payment of wages to workers by companies. He could only appoint a Board to investigate wages and conditions of employment under the Wage Determination Proclamation of 1937. However, this statute was never implemented because it would have reduced the profits of capitalist companies.[313] Capitalist companies in the territory capitalized on the absence of a policy guiding the regulation of wages and paid low wages to Swazi workers, thus reducing their production costs. For instance, in the early 1950s at Usuthu Forests Swazi and other African workers were earning far less than what their European counterparts were earning. Africans were paid from £3.00 to £6.50 depending on their position whereas Europeans were paid from £54.00 monthly.[314] The same applied in the mining industry. The average wage for African workers was £5.70 with free accommodation, food and medical care, whereas the wages for Europeans ranged from £30.00 to £100.00 depending on the position and type of job they were employed to do. In addition, all European employees at the Havelock Mine were entitled to Medical and Provident Fund benefits. At the Peak Timbers African workers were paid wages ranging from £2.10 to £5.10 per month with rations and accommodation. Their European counterparts, however, were paid monthly wages ranging from £28.00 to £46.17.[315] Clearly, the wage gap between Africans and Europeans was very huge and this caused problems between local workers and employers in later years.[316]

Swazi workers also resorted to partial individual labour withdrawal to rescue themselves from a harsh working environment. Patrick R. Forsyth-Thompson, observed in the 1950s that "Swazi workers…were found to be inefficient and unreliable because the general tendency was that they came and left as they pleased instead of sticking to their jobs."[317] Employers and colonial

[313] Wiehahn Report, Ministry of Labour Report of the Commission of Enquiry into all Aspects of Labour Relations in Swaziland, p. 33; see also Swaziland Colonial Annual Report for the year 1946, p. 21.

[314] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 157.

[315] *Swaziland Colonial Annual Report for the year 1949*, pp. 14-15.

[316] In April 1962, Swazi and other African workers at Usuthu Pulp went on strike partly because of the huge wage disparity between European and African workers. In 1963 there was another African workers' strike at the company which was followed by a series of strikes in the different companies which developed into a national unrest. A detailed analysis of strikes and trade unionism in the coming chapters.

[317] SNA File, 3094W, Notes of P.R. Forsyth Thompson, Labour Officer, 10 December 1957.

officials in Swaziland construed partial individual labour withdrawal as ‘go slow’, ‘absenteeism’, and ‘laziness’. Partial individual withdrawal of labour manifested in different forms. Workers individually withdrew their labour partially during working hours in the companies’ premises. Employers construed this to mean ‘loafing’, ‘laziness’ and ‘go slow’. This was in response to unbearable working conditions. The workers realized that they were being overworked yet underpaid, they subsequently resorted to reserve their energy in order to protect themselves from exploitation. Hlanze argues that partial individual labour withdrawal led to low production at Usuthu Forests in the 1950s.[318] At Havelock Mine, Swazi workers also demonstrated their consciousness through partial individual labour withdrawal. For instance, in late 1943, Herbert Johnson began to introduce fines for workers who were ‘loafing’ and gave a stern warning that any worker who would be caught shirking would be flogged.[319] This suggests that working conditions at the mine were difficult for some workers, thus they resorted to ‘loafing’ to insulate themselves from the harsh working conditions they were experiencing.

Partial individual withdrawal of labour also manifested in workers individually leaving local companies for a few days or months and then resurfaced to resume work. This was the most prevalent form of partial individual labour withdrawal among Swazi workers. It was very common for Swazi workers to individually withdraw their labour during the ploughing season to engage in subsistence farming.[320] The workers were aware that the wages they were getting from wage employment were insufficient to sustain themselves and their families and, that they needed to supplement them. Thus, they could not miss the only opportunity to produce food for themselves and their families. Consequently, local companies during the ploughing season were confronted with labour shortages since it was a common pattern among Swazi workers to individually withdraw their labour during this period. For instance, in one season alone at Usuthu Forests, the company was short of more 200 workers.[321] This should not be

[318] Hlanze, “The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…”,p.49.

[319] Crush, “The Construction of Compound Authority…”, p. 385.

[320] SNA File, 3094W, Notes of P.R. Forsyth Thompson, Labour Officer, 10 December 1957; Hlanze, “The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…”,p. 46.

[321] SNA File, 3094W, Notes of P.R. Forsyth Thompson, Labour Officer, 10 December 1957

misconstrued to mean these workers were peasants. They were workers who were aware that they were earning meagre wages, thus they had to engage in other means of production to sustain themselves and their families. Withdrawal of labour during the ploughing season was also prevalent in colonial Kenya when farming offered African workers more economic opportunities than wage labour.[322]

Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated the development of worker consciousness among Swazi workers between 1939 and 1955. It has contended that poor working and living conditions as well as low wages were at root of worker consciousness. The chapter has demonstrated, against the backdrop of group solidarity, that the 1939 and 1944 strikes at Havelock Mine, in addition to peasant consciousness and resistance to proletarianisation, were a clear demonstration of worker consciousness by Swazi and other African workers. Through the strikes Swazi workers were challenging living conditions as workers, thus they could not fully withdraw their labour and leave the mine but wanted to address their challenges and continue working for the mine.

The chapter has also demonstrated that during the period between 1939 and 1955 worker consciousness in Swaziland primarily manifested itself in early individual forms of labour withdrawal. The chapter has divided early individual forms of labour withdrawal into partial and complete individual withdrawal of labour. The latter was the most common form of labour withdrawal among Swazi workers during this period, particularly during the ploughing season. Individual labour withdrawal led to labour shortages and decreased production levels for local companies. The chapter also challenges the argument by earliest scholars that African workers did not exhibit any consciousness before the advent of trade unionism in Africa. It has demonstrated that workers exhibit consciousness in a number of ways and strategies only understood by themselves with or without workers associations or trade unions. The chapter, therefore, proves that Swazi workers demonstrated consciousness in the absence of worker organizations. The chapter stresses that early worker consciousness was a precursor to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

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[322] Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya,* p. 164.

CHAPTER 5

TRADITIONAL POLITICS, WORKERS' COUNCILS AND WORKER CONSCIOUSNESS, 1955-1962

Introduction

This chapter examines how traditional politics and the introduction of imposed workers' councils in the local companies developed consciousness among Swazi workers between 1955 and 1962. The chapter argues that the imposed workers' councils shaped consciousness among the workers as workers used these structures to challenge unfair dismissals, ill-treatment, poor working and living conditions and low wages. The chapter begins by defining workers' councils and then provides a historical background of the system of imposed worker representation in Swaziland. The chapter argues that this new form of consciousness ultimately led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Imposed workers' councils

Generally, workers' councils are elected bodies of workers' representatives that are usually designed to promote good employer and employee relationships for the benefit of both parties. This could be achieved by creating and maintaining good and stable working conditions as well as increasing the welfare and security of workers.[323] From this definition it is clear that workers' councils were originally meant to promote relations between employers and employees. However, their rights and obligations tend to hinge a lot on the national systems in which they operate, thus they differ according to the context in which they operate.[324] Workers' councils were introduced in the mid-1950s in colonial Swaziland. From the outset workers' councils were not introduced to promote good relations between employers and employees in Swaziland. Workers' councils in Swaziland were tailored to benefit the colonial state, employers and monarchy. Between 1955 and 1962, the colonial state and the monarchy connived with local

[323] International Centre for Human Resources in Nursing, p. 1.

[324] International Centre for Human Resources in Nursing, p. 1.

companies and introduced an imposed system of worker representation that would safeguard their economic interests in the local companies. The capitalisation of the Swazi monarchy had paved way for its involvement in capital-labour issues in the territory. The monarchy possessed shares in the major industries in Swaziland.[325] The imposed worker representation system was also used in a traditional power politics system to ensure that the monarchical/traditional system continued to have control over the working class. Hlanze[326] argues that traditional workers' councils such as *Ndabazabantu*, *Libandla* and *Lisolenkhosi* were subsequently deployed to safeguard the interests of the monarchy among local companies. These traditional structures liaised with the Swazi National Council and the Labour Officer and District Commissioners tha the colonial state introduced to look into labour relations in all the country's companies.[327] None of these workers' councils, however, were designed to represent the interests and aspirations of the workers.

The *Ndabazabantu* system originated from the compounds of the Witwatersrand mine and was first adopted at Havelock mine[328] and later at Usuthu Forests[329] and other local companies.[330] *Ndabazabantu* were appointed by King Sobhuza II to represent the traditional system, to listen to workers' grievances and report to him about issues affecting Swazi workers.[331] *Ndabazabantu* were *Tindvuna* that were appointed by the king or Swazi National Council and were allocated to the major local companies.[332] "*Ndabazabantu* was the king's local liaison officer"[333] who was

[325] At Usuthu Pulp for instance, the monarchy owned a 49% share while the company owned a 51% share.

[326] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 55.

[327] The office of Labour Officer was only created in 1957. Before the creation of this office the responsibility of dealing with labour issues in Swaziland was placed on District Commissioners.

[328] Crush, "Construction of Compound Authority…", p. 380.

[329] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 55.

[330] See for instance, SNA, File 3049W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to Peak Timbers Limited, 10th October, 1957.

[331] See also, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 55.

[332] F.C. Catchpole, Report on Labour Legislation in Swaziland, Mbabane, 12 May 1960 in: M. Fransman, "Labour, Capital and the State in Swaziland, 1962-1977", p. 59.

[333] Matsebula, *The King's Eye*, p. 55.

placed at a company and whom the Swazi National Council considered as their ambassador.[334] Since King Sobhuza II represented the traditional system as an institution the new structure was therefore representing the traditional order not him or his views as an individual.

Only workers' complaints of a petty nature were expected to be channeled through *Ndabazabantu*. All workers had direct access to *Ndabazabantu* at all times if required.[335] *Ndabazabantu* were usually hereditary clan chiefs[336] who were neither appointed on the basis of their capabilities nor their industrial experience but rather on the basis of their political position within the traditional structures of the Swazi people. Consequently, most *Ndabazabantu* were described as mediocre in their work and incapable of adequately representing the complaints of African workers.[337] There was no fixed day for workers' complaints at the Compound Manager's office. There is scant evidence showing that *Ndabazabantu* came back to the complainants to give them feedback[338] or successfully argued a case with local companies on behalf of the workers.

Ndabazabantu were accorded a task that was usually the function of trade unions. One of their functions included making frequent visits to all units in the companies and reporting to the central management.[339] In essence, the *Ndabazabantu* system was designed to frustrate the development of trade unions because they were deemed as disruptive by employers, colonial state and traditional system. This was aimed at pacifying and diffusing group consciousness among workers. Due to its individualistic representative nature, this system only channeled

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[334] SNA, File 3094B, Notes for Office Purposes of Meeting of the Secretary for African Affairs with the Standing Committee of the Swazi National Council, Lobamba, 24th March, 1954.

[335] SNA, File 3049W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to Peak Timbers Limited, 10th October, 1957.

[336] A typical example is that which happened at Usuthu Pulp Company where Preston Bhembe replaced his late father, Makhabane Bhembe as Ndabazabantu. See SNA, File 3094B, Notes for Office Purposes of Meeting of the Secretary for African Affairs with the Standing Committee of the Swazi National Council, Lobamba, 24th March 1954. See also, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 55-56.

[337] SNA, File 3049W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to Peak Timbers, 10th October, 1957.

[338] SNA, File3404, Notes of the Labour Officer on Jeremiah Simelane on his Visit to Usuthu Forests, 17th August, 1960.

[339] SNA, File 3049W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to Peak Timbers Limited, 10th October, 1957.

workers to air their grievances individually rather than collectively, it was meant to itomise workers.[340] This was the general consensus even among colonial officials in Swaziland. Carl Todd claimed that Swaziland needed to be protected from the popular trade unionism that had developed among Africans elsewhere in Africa during this period. His argument was that the African Trade Union Movement tended to develop along sinister lines instead of focusing on the regulation of labour issues. This was even more threatening for Swaziland because the Trade Union movement would develop to the detrimental of the Swazi traditional system. Todd wanted trade unions that would be tightly controlled by the state. Consequently, he suggested the introduction of a Works Council system which would only consider the petty things and exclude discussions on wages.[341] Thus, *Ndabazabantu* only attended workers' grievances of a petty nature, not wage increments. This system of worker representation was only given the autonomy of looking at workers' treatment and making sure that they received food rations.[342]

Ndabazabantu was also intended to uphold traditional and cultural values by making sure that Swazi workers attended traditional, national activities and ceremonies. They negotiated with local companies to release workers to heed to the king's call for national assignments.[343] This was one way through which the traditional system as an institution sought to exert control over the working class. The invention of this traditional worker representation was intended to benefit the monarchical institution during the period of intensive capital penetration. Having seen the power of collective bargain among black workers in South Africa in challenging the apartheid regime, the monarchy was fully aware of the threat posed by the workers to its hegemony. Culture was, therefore, used in the local companies in an ideological and traditional power politics perspective to maintain loyalty from the working class. As Hugh Macmillan argues, Sobhuza revived the Swazi custom in colonial Swaziland to have control over his people.[344] The monarchy sought to control workers within a traditional framework among local

[340] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 56.

[341] Reconstituted European Advisory Council, Minutes of Meeting, May 1961, p. 41.

[342] SNA, File 3094B, Notes for Office Purposes of Meeting of the Secretary for African Affairs with the Standing Committee of the Swazi National Council, Lobamba, 24th March, 1954.

[343] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 56.

[344] Macmillan, "Anthropologists and 'Traditionalists'…", p. 555.

companies. Thus, worker representatives were designed not only to prevent the setting up of trade unions but also to maintain control and loyalty from the workers. However, this plan was unsuccessful as it worked to raise awareness among the workers not only as unorganized groups but also more as individuals.

The *Libandla* was an internal council of African workers that was tasked with providing some appropriate means of consultation between management and African employees on matters connected with their life at the local companies. Its functions just like those of *Ndabazabantu* were of a petty nature. They included investigating marriage disputes, controlling vagrants and prostitutes and the illicit beer-brewing, preventing and investigating fights and quarrels, supervising the general cleanliness of the village which included a daily routine check of the state of the ablution blocks, the investigation of complaints and grievances, the submission to the management of suggestions of a constructive nature. The *Libandla* had no power to fine anyone or to take upon itself any processes which were the prerogative of Government and the Law. It could only recommend suspensions to management in the event of proved social misbehaviours.[345] This demonstrates clearly that the Libandla was not designed to safeguard the interests and aspirations of Swazi workers but those of the employers, the colonial state and traditional system.

Apart from the traditional structures, there was also the Department of Labour which looked into labour relations in the local companies. Initially, there were District Commissioners who were tasked by the colonial state with the responsibility of supervising labour conditions in the local companies until the appointment of a Labour Officer.[346] The first Labour Officer in Swaziland was appointed in 1957.[347] Again, these structures were unrepresentative of workers' interests and aspirations, thus they developed awareness among the workers. These structures only protected the interests of the colonial government, monarchy and capital even though they claimed to represent the workers. The normal course for workers to place complaints was first to

[345] See for instance, SNA, File 3402/4, K.C. Riggs, General Manger, Mhlume Sugar Co. Ltd to DC, Siteki, 8th March, 1962; SNA, File 3404, Labour Officer on Jeremiah Simelane, Usuthu Pulp, 17thAugust, 1960.

[346] *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1954* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963), p. 8.

[347] SNA, File 3402/4, Annual Report of Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, for the year 1960.

the District Commissioner through their *Ndabazabantu* who would then take up the matter to the Labour Officer whenever it was necessary.[348] Evidence indicates, however, that workers did not always follow the laid down protocol when they sought to redress their grievances.[349] They sometimes took it upon themselves to approach either the office of the District Commissioner or the office of the Labour Officer to place their complaints.

This system of worker representation was deliberately intended to diffuse and pacify group consciousness among the workers since it sought to represent workers at individual level. Further, this system only represented workers on grievances of petty nature, not serious issues such as wage demands. In spite of the unworkability of this system it led to new forms of worker consciousness as Swazi workers found ways to manipulate these structures and appealed poor working and living conditions as well as low wages. The workers exploited the compound system, which was intended to control African labour, to facilitate unity among themselves and designed strategies to respond to challenges that they encountered at the work place. Ultimately, this system of worker representation became unpopular with the workers since it only represented the interests of employers, colonial government and the institution of the Swazi monarchy at the expense of the interests of the workers. Thus, workers eventually formed trade unions as they sought a fair representation of their interests in the work place.

Imposed workers' councils and the evolution of worker consciousness, 1955-1962

Worker consciousness in this chapter is conceptualized in the context of individual complaints that were directed by the workers to the imposed workers' councils. Swazi workers exploited imposed worker representatives such as *Ndabazabantu* or *Indvuna, Lisolenkhosi*, Labour Officer, District Commissioner, Resident Commissioner, Swazi National Council and *Libandla* by placing their grievances to these bodies. This new form of consciousness among Swazi workers did not mark a complete disappearance of the early forms of labour withdrawal explored in the preceding chapter. This is because the level of awareness among workers was not always the same. While some workers demonstrated awareness by individually appealing unfair treatment

[348] SNA, File 3402/4, Labour Officer on a Labour Complaint at Mhlume Sugar Company, 19th January, 1960.

[349] See for instance, SNA, File 3402/4, Labour Officer,Labour Complaint on Mhlume Sugar Company, 19th January, 1960.

to the imposed worker representatives other workers were still demonstrating their awareness through early forms of individual labour withdrawal.

The imposed workers' councils which were designed to represent workers on petty issues not wage related issues stimulated a new form of worker consciousness among Swazi workers between 1955 and 1962. This evolution from demonstrating worker consciousness largely through early individual forms of labour withdrawal to individually placing complaints to imposed workers' councils coincided with the completion of compounds in which African workers were accommodated.[350] These compounds which were built to control African labour among local companies promoted awareness among the workers. The workers exploited the compounds to share their grievances and strategies to overcome their challenges.[351] As H.S. Simelane argues, worker consciousness developed as workers lived together and shared their grievances in compounds built by the companies to control African labour.[352] The compounds facilitated social interaction among the workers as they met in the evening and discussed their work experiences and shared solutions to the problems they encountered.[353] The preceding chapter has also demonstrated how African workers at the Havelock Asbestos Mine exploited the compounds, which were meant to control them, and planned several strikes between 1939 and 1944.

Unfair dismissals of Swazi workers

Swazi workers challenged unfair dismissals by appealing to the imposed worker representatives. They were quick to exploit the compounds to discuss how they could challenge unfair dismissals at the hands of capitalist companies. For instance, Jeremiah Simelane, discussed his dismissal with the council of workers or *libandla,* who offered him advice after he felt unfairly treated by the Usuthu Forests:

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[350] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 57.

[351] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 57.

[352] See for instance, Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 177.

[353] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 57.

> at 5 am when the whistle went I called all the *libandla* and told them what had happened. The *libandla* said "the Compound Manager should have told us of your faults and that he was dismissing you", and asked whether the Compound Manager had told me what I had done wrong. I told the *libandla* that I was going to report to the authorities, i.e. to the labour office. The *libandla* said they would be pleased to know the reason why I was expelled and agreed that I should report to authority. Some of the *libandla* even suggested they should strike work until they knew the reason for my leaving. I asked them not to do so but to resume their normal work. We then separated, and the people said they hoped the authorities would go and have a talk with them, so they could ventilate their complaints.[354]

Jeremiah Simelane's case demonstrates that he was aware that he had been unfairly dismissed by the company. As an individual, Simelane was quick to use the structure of the *libandla* to appeal unfair treatment at the hands of the company. However, by referring the issue to the Labour Officer the *libandla* reflected a sense of helplessness and failure of the traditional structures to deal with workers' grievances. It is not clear who had jurisdiction over what, between the Compound Manager, *libandla* and Labour Officer. However, the fact that the Compound Manager did not feel obliged to consult the *libandla* about Simelane's dismissal indicates that the company did not recognize the importance of the *libandla*. In the end, the *libandla* is depicted as a dog without teeth to bite. They were banking on the authorities to help this aggrieved worker, which then questions their very existence in the company. Even though we do not know how the matter was finalised, the spirit at which it was discussed suggests that it failed. This shows the ineffectiveness of the imposed traditional workers' councils since they could not resolve workers' problems on their own. Even the Catchpole Report of 1960 on labour legislation in Swaziland captured the ineffectiveness of the imposed worker representatives.[355]

Jeremiah's case is a clear indication that by design the *libandla* was a hindrance to the birth of trade unionism in the country. It was put in place to negotiate issues on behalf of the workers. Consequently, workers began to rely on the *libandla* to resolve issues on their behalf. They reported their grievances to the *libandla* instead of withdrawing their labour. The workers were

[354] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, on Jeremiah Simelane, 17thAugust, 1960.

[355] F.C. Catchpole, *Report on Labour Legislation in Swaziland*, p. 3 cited in: Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 352.

no longer looking at themselves as solvers of their problems. This imposed worker representation system was just an instrument to prevent the birth of trade unions.

Further, Jeremiah's refusal to allow the *libandla* to go on strike on his behalf demonstrates awareness that it was not going to help solve his problem. Simelane did not trust that the *libandla* would successfully negotiate his unfair dismissal at the company. Instead, he preferred pursuing the matter, himself, with the Labour Officer. On the same note, the refusal by Jeremiah demonstrates lack of group consciousness on his part. By preferring to act individually Jeremiah expressed individualism instead of group solidarity. Jeremiah's actions further demonstrated that he was still nursing hopes of being reinstated by the company. Perhaps, Jeremiah thought that if other workers went on strike on his behalf, this would jeopardise his chances of being reinstated by the company.[356]

Through Jeremiah's case we see how workers at Usuthu Forests manipulated the compounds which were meant to control and repress them, to discuss and plan how to overcome their grievances. By 1955 Usuthu Forests had built extensive compounds on company premises that could accommodate about 3,000 workers. To the company, this was conducive for labour repression. To the workers, this was a platform to share their grievances and plan how to overcome them. In these villages, Simelane argues, "workers lived together, shared common problems and experiences. They built a sense of unity and group consciousness that was never achieved before in the country."[357] The compounds became the perfect place for developing worker consciousness as workers became aware of their bargaining strength against their employer. Clearly, the workers had realised the need to design new ways of limiting their exploitation at the company.[358]

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[356] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", pp. 59-60

[357] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 177.

[358] Simelane, *Colonialism,* p. 177.

Evidence indicates that Jeremiah Simelane also appealed his dismissal to the 'king's eye' (*Lisolenkhosi)*. He had been employed as Compound *Indvuna* (foreman) at Bhunya until the arrival of Bafana Maseko as *Ndabazabantu*.[359] Simelane protested that;

> On 15/8/60 I was called to the office of Mr. Cameron, the Compound Manager, together with George Mdluli, a Compound Policeman.... Then the clerk called us before Mr. Purcell Junior, who said that Mr. Cameron had never been satisfied with our work since our arrival. Then I asked which work of mine had failed to give satisfaction. The only thing I could think of was that I had three times asked Mr. Cameron to increase my pay from £6 a month to a level commensurate with my responsibilities as Compound Foreman. Mr. Purcell replied that he had not heard from Mr. Cameron what I had done wrong…. I asked Cameron why he had dismissed me without telling the employees that I as Foreman was being dismissed for inefficiency, and without telling me the reason. He replied, "Don't need you anymore", I asked, "What is my fault?" I told Cameron that I would report to the authorities, and he told me to report where I liked.[360]

Clearly, this worker was victimized for individually requesting for a wage increase. The company officials were aware of the powerlessness of the traditional structures to arbitrate and resolve conflicts involving Swazi workers. Thus, the company official told Simelane to report his dismissal wherever he liked. The evidence provided above indicates that this worker did nothing wrong. His only crime was demanding a wage increment. By dismissing him the company was getting rid of a potentially 'dangerous' worker who might influence other workers to demand wage increments.[361] The fact that as an individual he was not afraid to engage the company to increase his wages suggests that this is a worker who was aware that he was not paid wages that were proportional to the work that he was doing. This made the management of the company to feel threatened by this worker and that he could set precedence to other workers to demand wage increments if and when they wanted.

Other workers also challenged unfair dismissals by appealing to the District Commissioner (DC). For instance, Mazizi Lukhele and George Masina who worked as drivers at the Usuthu Forests

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[359] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer on Jeremiah Simelane, 17thAugust, 1960.

[360] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer on Jeremiah Simelane, 17thAugust, 1960.

[361] See also Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 60.

Company were dismissed in 1960 for allegedly being drunk on duty. Following their dismissal, the two workers appealed to the District Commissioner who then engaged the company on the matter and demanded reasons why these workers were dismissed from the company.[362]Responding to the District Commissioner of Mbabane, the company gave the following reasons**:**

> Mazizi Lukhele was instructed to drive down the Siteki Hill in the first gear, thereby letting the engine to be used as a brake. He drove down in higher gear, thus using his reserve of air. He then found that his brakes were not working efficiently and stopped the vehicle… Mazizi reported that his brakes had failed… Our mechanic then proceeded to the vehicle at Siteki to find all that was required was to run the engine to pump the air reservoir full. Mazizi smelt of liquor at the time. The mechanic then instructed him to proceed to the bottom of the hill in first gear. On following the vehicle, he found that Mazizi was not driving in first gear as instructed, and was driving at a speed considered dangerous for that part of the road. On returning to our depot, we gave Mazizi notice as we considered him not a suitable driver for our heavy vehicles. George Masina, who was co-driver of this vehicle, was discharged by us two weeks previous to this incident as he was not available on three occasions when his vehicle was due to leave for Goba. He pleaded with us to give him another chance, which we did, but on the night of the incident he also smelt of liquor, and on our investigation we found that he had been discharged from the pulp mill section for being drunk on duty. We therefore decided that he was not suitable to our requirements of a driver and gave him notice of discharge. [363]

Two things emerge from this quotation. First, workers appealed to the District Commissioner when they felt they were unfairly dismissed by the company. The workers were aware that they had a right to employment, fair trials and hearings. When they were dismissed simply on allegations, without trial, they were quick to protest to the District Commissioner as means to protect their jobs. This demonstrates consciousness among workers since they were aware that they were entitled to a fair hearing, thus they appealed to the structure of the District Commissioner. Second, the quotation suggests that the District Commissioner took action and followed the matter closely by demanding an explanation from the company with regards to the workers' dismissals. However, it seems that is how far the District Commissioner pursued the

[362] SNA, File 3402/4, Usuthu Pulp Company to the District Commissioner, Mbabane, 12th January, 1962.

[363] SNA, File 3402/4, Usuthu Pulp Company to the District Commissioner, Mbabane, 12th January, 1962.

matter. There is no evidence showing that the District Commissioner followed the matter up to the end. The fact that he demanded reasons for the dismissals does not tell us if he had any powers to reinstate these workers. It only suggests that he wanted to know why the workers were dismissed. Again, we see the failure and ineffectiveness of these imposed structures to represent workers' interests and aspirations whom they claimed to represent.

Swazi workers, between 1955 and 1962, continued to protest individually to the labour officers and other authorities in defense of their interests. For instance, when Gideon Nyoni, a driver at the Usuthu Forests Company, was dismissed for allegedly speeding by a Mr. Foley in 1961, he appealed to the Labour Officer that he was unfairly dismissed. Nyoni insisted that he had not been speeding, as his accuser alleged. He argued that Foley dismissed himbecause the former had asked for a day's pay, a request his tormentor had turned down.[364] It seems it was a common pattern for the company to get rid of workers who asked for their wages to be increased. As already argued in the case of Jeremiah, this was one way the company got rid of potentially 'dangerous' workers. The alleged speeding was an excuse by the company to dismiss Nyoni. What perpetuated this practice on the part of the company was the fact that they were aware that the structures that were in place were powerless to challenge them.

A similar case involved Lancelot Dlamini and Titus Masi who each complained individually to the District Commissioner of Mbabane upon being fired by the Usuthu Forests Company in 1961. Justifying their dismissal to the District Commissioner, L.J.W. Loveless, a company official, argued that Lancelot was dismissed because of his inefficiency.[365] In the words of the official,

> Lancelot was employed in the Stores but because of unsatisfactory work in this department he was moved to the pulp Production department and was employed in our bale handling, storage and dispatch department. In this work he was also thoroughly unsatisfactory and was recommended for dismissal by the supervisor concerned. Lancelot was then transferred to the

[364] SNA, File 3402/4/20, J.B. Wilson, Labour Officer to the Executive Director, Usuthu Pulp Company, 22nd April, 1961.

[365] SNA, File 3402/4, L.J.W. Loveless of Usuthu Pulp Company to the District Commissioner, Mbabane, 15th December, 1961.

> Production department. In this third position he again proved equally unsatisfactory and was warned on numerous occasions by his Shift Foreman and Manager.[366]

On the dismissal of Titus Masi, Loveless argued that

> This man was originally employed in our Production department where he was regarded as thoroughly unsatisfactory, the situation culminating in a transfer to the Engineering department where again he has demonstrated nothing but indolence and unwillingness to learn. It is hardly surprising that in these circumstances a mutual exchange of words occurred between Titus Masi and the Instrument Foreman, Mr. Budding, for whom he was working. On the weekend of the 2nd/3rdof December 1961 he was instructed to report for duty but failed to do so.[367]

Both Lancelot and Masi disputed the charges leveled against them and appealed for the District Commissioner's intervention. In so doing, theydemonstrated awareness of their rights as workers and were more than willing to protect their rights when they realised that those rights were threatened and violated. Moreover, there is no indication that they were offered an opportunity to state their side of the story in the disciplinary measures taken against them. These cases are a confirmation of Keletso E. Atkins's argument that formal structures available for African workers in Natal were unfavourable to the workers. Even though Atkins uses court cases to demonstrate that African workers never won cases against their masters, which obviously disappointed the workers. Instead of encouraging workers to look to the courts for fair trails, this situation made workers realise the need to resort to early forms of withdrawal of their labour as the most effective means of ending the disputes.[368] Whereas Africans in Natal responded to unfavourable court cases through early forms labour withdrawal, Swazi workers on the other hand used the available structures to challenge unfair dismissals at the hands of capitalists companies.

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[366] SNA, File 3402/4, L.J.W. Loveless of Usuthu Pulp Company to the District Commissioner, Mbabane, 15th December,1961.

[367] SNA, File 3402/4, L.J.W. Loveless of Usuthu Pulp Company to the District Commissioner, Mbabane, 15th December, 1961.

[368] Atkins, *The Moon's Dead*, pp. 98-99.

Unfair dismissals were very common in the period between 1955 and 1962 among local companies in Swaziland. At Mhlume Sugar Company Mshengu Dlamini who felt unfairly dismissed by the company appealed to the visiting Labour Officer who was in the company of *Lisolenkhosi*, District Commissioner and *Ndabazabantu.* Dlamini was dismissed by the company for allegedly causing trouble in the compounds on weekends.[369] Even though it is not clear what kind of trouble Mshengu Dlamini is accused of causing it is very clear he was not satisfied with his dismissal, thus he took the opportunity to place his dissatisfaction to the visiting Labour Officer, District Commissioner and *Ndabazabantu*.

There was another complaint about unfair dismissal at Mhlume Sugar Company to District Commissioner. Mr. S.P. Nkuna appealed to the District Commissioner what he believed to bean unfair dismissal at Mhlume Sugar Company. He wrote a letter to the District Commissioner seeking clarity on the reasons for his dismissal. He wrote, "may you please let me know if it's allowed to be fired by a white [man] without a reason, I have been hired in Mhlume twice but I was fired for no reason. So please would you please explain Sir, but I would like to meet him there in Mbabane in front of your eyes Sir, to let he explain the reasons of mine, what I have done."[370] It is clear that Mr. Nkuna sought for help from the District Commissioner after he was dismissed by the company.

It was not only Swazi workers but also *Ndabazabantu* who complained about unfair dismissals at the hands of local companies. Makhabane Bhembe who was working as *Ndabazabantu* at Usuthu Forests complained to the Swazi National Council that the company was "dismissing Swazi workers at any time and for anything. This complaint worries me because the Swazi National Council instructed me to see that no worker is dismissed unjustly from work and that if a worker commits an offence he must not be dismissed from his job but should be brought to

[369] SNA, File 3402/4,Labour complaint to the Visiting Labour Officer, District Commissioner and *Ndabazabantu* at Mhlume Sugar Company, 5th February, 1960.

[370] SNA, File 3402/4, Letter by S.P. NKuna to the District Commissioner, 8th February, 1962. See also SNA, File 3402/4, Letter from the District Commissioner to Manager Mhlume on dismissal of S. P. Nkuna, 22nd February, 1962.

court to be dealt with accordingly and that after this the company should employ him."[371] Makhabane went on to sum up the dismissals at the company by stating that "the rate at which this Pulp Company takes on Swazi workers is nearly equal to the rate at which this company dismisses them. Even the recruiting agents are sending scores of letters to our office to complain about this unjust dismissal of the people they have recruited."[372] Bhembe added that when he confronted the Directors of the Usuthu Forests Company to provide a justification for the foremen to dismiss other workers of the company willy-nilly, the company argued that there was no regulation in the country which prevented the foremen from dismissing any worker under their control.[373] Bhembe then requested the Swazi National Council to engage government on promulgating a regulation that would stop local companies from firing any Swazi worker whenever they felt like and for nothing. He appealed for a fair trial before a worker was dismissed.[374] It is clear that Swazi workers unfairly dismissed in the local companies anytime and for anything. This was encouraged by the fact that there was no clear policy guiding the dismissal of African employees in Swaziland. Thus, the dismissal of Swazi workers was left to the discretion of foremen who dismissed workers without even consulting company management and the structures that were available to deal with such issues. This was despite the claim by managementof local companies that there was a clear laid down dismissal procedure for African workers which was always carefully followed by Senior Management. For instance, responding angrily to the District Commissioner following his complaints about dismissals made by the company, Usuthu Pulp Company management argued that the dismissal of Africans was not only twice as laborious but also twice as time-consuming and twice as complicated.[375] However, this was not true considering the high rate at which Swazi workers were dismissed at the company.

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[371] SNA, File 3402/4, MakhabaneBhembe, Ndabazabantu, Usuthu Forests to National Secretary, Swazi National Council, 3rd August, 1960.

[372] SNA, File 3402/4, Makhabane Bhembe, Ndabazabantu, Usuthu Forests to National Secretary, Swazi National Council, 3rd August, 1960.

[373] SNA, File 3402/4, Makhabane Bhembe, Ndabazabantu, Usuthu Forests to National Secretary, Swazi National Council, 3rd August, 1960.

[374] SNA, File 3402/4, Makhabane Bhembe, Ndabazabantu, Usuthu Forests to National Secretary, Swazi National Council, 3rd August, 1960.

[375] SNA, File 3402/4, L.W.J. Loveless, Usuthu Pulp Company to the District Commissioner, Mbabane, 15th December, 1961.

In addition, none of the dismissals revealed that procedure was never followed. Managers did not report to *Ndabazabantu* labourers they had expelled. This is a clear sign that they did not recognize the traditional structures placed at local companies.[376]

Low wages for Swazi workers

Low wages in the period between 1955 and 1962 continued to be at the root of worker consciousness among local companies. As Table 1 below indicates, in the early 1960s, wages for African workerswere far lower than those offered to their European counterparts.[377] Africansin the major companies by 1960 earned from £3 to £25 compared to Europeans who earned up to £62 monthly. The wage of the lowest paid African employee was £59 less than what the highest white workers were paid.[378]

Table 2

Wage structure of the major industries in Swaziland, 1960

Industry	**African Workers**	**European Workers**
Forestry and Timber	£3-£6/5/0	£54
Sugar Irrigation	£4-£7	£58
Construction	£4-£6	£60
Building	£8/10/0-£25	£62
Retail	£7/10/0	£41/10/0

Source: *H.S. Simelane, Colonialism, p. 157; H.S. Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development of...", p. 50*.

The table above clearly indicates that there was a huge wage disparity between the wages of African and European employees in Swaziland. This huge wage disparity was based on the fact that Africans occupied largely unskilled positions.

In 1960, a deputation of four Swazi labourers from Mhlume Sugar Company went to place a complaint about low wages to the *Lisolenkhosi* who in turn brought them to the Labour Officer.

[376] SNA, File 3402/4, Makhabane Bhembe, Ndabazabantu, Usuthu Pulp to Lisolenkhosi, 20thAugust, 1960.

[377] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 157.

[378] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 157.

The labourers complained that they were underpaid at £1.1.6d a week whereas foreign labourers that were employed by the same company on the same job were paid £3 - £4 a week. The deputation argued that when they raised this discrepancy with the Management they were told that the king had said that Swazi workers should be paid low wages. Consequently, the workers wished to place their complaint to the king through the *Lisolenkhosi*.[379] Further, the workers complained that Swazi labourers were being replaced displaced by Nyasa workers who were paid£3 - £4 a week.[380] The evidence provided above clearly demonstrates that Swazi workers were not only paid low wages but also underpaid for the same job that other African employees were paid for doing. The fact that these workers raised the discrepancy first with management and later with *Lisolenkhosi* and Labour Officer demonstrates awareness that they deserved to be paid equal wages with other workers for the same job irrespective of nationality. When they were not satisfied with the response from the Labour Officer the workers made it clear that they wanted to pursue the matter with the king.

Swazi workers at Ubombo Ranches also complained against being paid low wages. In their letter to the Resident Commissioner, the workers complained that "there is no money here. We work hard here but there is no money."[381] Clearly, the workers were aware that they were paid meager wages despite that they worked very hard. They demonstrated that their wages were not commensurate with the work that they were doing. Also, the fact that they placed their complaint to the Resident Commissioner instead of the structures within the company indicates that they did not have confidence that the imposed workers' councils would help solve their problems.

Indeed, the workers were not slow to complain against meagre wages and unpaid overtime. In 1960, for example, workers at Usuthu Forests complained to the Labour Officer that, even though they worked on Sundays, they were not paid at 1/9 for three hours as required by law. As the Labour Officer himself admitted, this was one of the major sources of dissatisfaction on the

[379] SNA, File 3402/4, Labour Officer on a Labour Complaint at Mhlume Sugar Company, 19th January, 1960.

[380] SNA, File 3402/4, Labour Officer on a Labour Complaint at Mhlume Sugar Company, 19th January, 1960.

[381] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

part of the African workers. Consequently, they demanded an end to overtime work. Despite the fact that the workers complained several times to their foreman about unpaid overtime, their complaints fell on deaf ears because they never received their overtime payment at the end of each month anyway.[382] This was a great loss to the workers because overtime was supposed to be paid at double the normal rates, on Sundays and public holidays, and at one and a half times the normal rates on other days.[383] Working overtime was one way through which African workers supplemented their meagre wages at the company. The workers, realizing that they were losing a lot of money on unpaid overtime, challenged the company by reporting the matter to the Labour Officer hoping that he would help them in that regard. However, the fact that there was no improvement at the end of each pay day suggests that the labour officer did not help them in that regard. It also suggests the failure of these imposed structures to redress workers' grievances. Most importantly, this shows that these worker representatives failed to represent the workers whom they claimed to represent.

Despite being paid low wages, African workers also worked for long hours in a week. In a letter addressed to Roberts Construction, one of the contractors for Usuthu Pulp, the Labour Officer complained that the hours of work which were stated to be 54 hours a week were excessive particularly if considered in relation to the rates of pay for the labourers.[384] This demonstrates that African workers were not only being overworked but also not paid according to the work that they were doing at the company.

Poor and inadequate housing for Swazi workers

Swazi workers also had to contend with poor accommodation resulting from their employers' policy of cost minimisation and profit maximisation. From the inception of local companies, accommodation for black workers was a target for cost minimisation.[385] These companies

[382] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, on Jeremiah Simelane, 17thAugust, 1960.

[383] SNA, File 3402/7/1, Draft Regulations Governing Wage Rates, 8thMarch, 1961.

[384]SNA, File 3049W/46, Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to the Personnel Officer, Roberts Construction Limited, 23rd June, 1960. See also SNA, File 3049W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to Roberts Construction Limited, 31st May, 1960.

[385] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 177.

introduced the compound system which was popular in the mining circles in South Africa since the 19th century because it was a cheap way of housing and controlling African labour.[386] This followed the colonial government's stipulation that "African workers were to be accommodated in villages built on the company site."[387] African housing was divided into married and single quarters.

Apart that accommodation for African workers in Swaziland was segregated from European accommodation[388] with the latter's surroundings superior in every way to African accommodation and surroundings[389] it was also terrible compared to European accommodation. At Usuthu Pulp, for instance, the rooms in the compounds were overcrowded with 6 three-tier beds in a small room of 20 ft. by 12ft. Also, as Dr. M.S. Compton, the visiting health medical officer, noted, sanitation was totally terrible and unsuited to the workers accommodated at Bhunya. He also called for the completion of toilets in block B, one of the African compounds at Bhunya. Dr. Compton also observed that the sewage disposal was contaminated. In addition, the septic tank was unfinished and the medical officer feared it would not cope with the load that was imposed on it.[390] J.B. Wilson, the Labour Officer, on his visit to one of Usuthu Pulp's Forest Blocks reiterated Dr. Compton's observations on the state and conditions of compounds for African employees.[391] Married quarters consisted of three rooms with a small open veranda. Sinks and stoves were provided and where possible water was laid on.[392] Single quarters were 'bunk houses' accommodating eight workers to one room on double-decker bunks, some of

[386] Turrell, "Kimberley…", p. 45; Van Onselen, *Chibaro*, p. 34.

[387] Dlamini, "Race Relations…", p. 91.

[388] SNA, File 3402/1, Dr. M.S. Compton, Medical Officer of Health, to the Project Manager, Roberts Construction, Mhlambanyatsi, 22nd July, 1960.

[389] See Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 66.

[390] SNA, File 3402/1, Dr. M.S. Compton, Medical Officer of Health, to the Project Manager, Roberts Construction, Mhlambanyatsi, 22nd July, 1960; SNA, File 3402/1, Dr. M.S. Compton, Medical Officer of Health, to the Project Manager, Roberts Construction, Mhlambanyatsi, 19th May, 1960; see also SNA File 3049W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to Roberts Construction Ltd, 31st May, 1960.

[391] SNA, File 3049W, Notes of a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Gege Forest Block, 26thAugust, 1960.

[392] SNA, File 3094W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to the Usuthu Forests, Bhunya, Swaziland, 10th December, 1957.

which were constructed of wood while others were of metal. All beds were provided with wire bedsprings.[393] The evidence above proves that African workers were exposed to appalling conditions in their compounds while Europeans, on the other hand, lived in better conditions with good sanitation. Further, the evidence suggests that there was shortage of accommodation for African workers at the company, thus they were overcrowded. Clearly, Africans had no privacy as they lived together in groups. On the other hand, Europeans lived freely without being harassed by compound managers and policemen because they lived in a separate township at Mhlambanyatsi where they had superior housing and surroundings.

By the early to the mid 1960s, African workers were still overcrowded at Usuthu Pulp. There were 64-bed single men's hostels at Bhunya which totaled to 64 rooms which accommodated four workers per room.[394] This shortage of accommodation at Usuthu Pulp is well explained in a popular song that was composed by Swazi workers which goes thus "*meme mntfwanami siyeBhunya baholile, eBhunya baholile siyolalaphi namhlanje maye nalokushenda kuyahlupha mntfwanami*"[395]. The song translates to "get on my back my child let's go to Bhunya since they have been paid their month's salaries, but where will we sleep? These extra-marital affairs are very problematic my child." Through this song workers were criticizing the shortage of accommodation for African workers at the company. Clearly, workers were unhappy with the company's policy on accommodation which deprived them of visits by family members and relatives, thus they composed a song to express their unhappiness.

Labourers at Ubombo Ranches also complained to the governor about lack of accommodation for African workers. In their words the workers complained

> We are not treated well at Ubombo Ranches. Here at Ubombo Ranches there is work but we are troubled. We have no houses here. A person is simply engaged but it is necessary for him to make his own arrangements as to

[393] SNA, File 3094W, Notes on the Visit of the Labour Officer to the Usuthu Forests, Bhunya, Swaziland, 10th December, 1957.

[394] SNA, File 3049W, Notes of a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Usuthu Pulp Company, 27th February, 1964.

[395] See Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 67.

> where he will sleep… it is necessary for a person when he comes back from work that he should build his own house…[396]

This does not only demonstrate the lack of accommodation for African workers at Ubombo Ranches but also the company's failure to adhere to the colonial government's policy that "African workers were to be accommodated in villages built on the company site."[397] African workers at Ubombo Ranches were also not happy that once they had built their own accommodation company policy did not allow them to give their house to their friends after they were dismissed from work. They were forced to leave it to the company including tools they had bought for themselves.[398] The finish on the available houses that were built by the Ubombo Ranches was poor with holes crumbling in walls and floors. There were only two shower blocks, each with one shower for males and females. These facilities were inadequate for the compound population estimated to be 181 in 1961. Government regulations prescribed 1 shower per 15 persons. The drain from one shower was blocked, and water was running along an open furrow attracting flies.[399] In the mill compound where there was an estimated population of 350 workers there were insanitary arrangements which needed emergency remedy. For instance, the aqua-privy septic tank was flooded and gave a very bad smell. The latrines were inadequate with 1 latrine for 42 persons. Thus, the septic tank was unsurprisingly over-full. Even the temporary pit latrine that was built to relive the situation was not wide enough.[400]

Accommodation for African workers at Mhlume Sugar Company was also both terrible and inadequate. The company acknowledged that the state and scale of housing for its African workforce was jerry-built and not of high quality standard. The ablution blocks were overcrowded. While government regulations stipulated 1 to 15 persons the company scaled down to 1 to 15 employees. Even by these standards there was only 1 male ablution block per 16

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[396] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

[397] Dlamini, "Race Relations…", p. 91.

[398] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

[399] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

[400] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

male employees. Not only were the designs for the ablution blocks appalling, they were also appeared to be excessively used since in most blocks the septic tanks were overflowing and the stench abominable.[401] There was also a complaint that Nyasa workers were given a priority over Swazi workers with regards to accommodation at Mhlume. The Labour Officer reminded the company that it was required by law in terms of its license to provide accommodation to all its African employees on company territory. He further went on to promise the company that he will be closely following the matter until it was redressed according to the laws of Swaziland.[402]

Accommodation was also both inadequate and poor for African workers at Peak Timbers Limited. Africans were overcrowded in the compounds. The compounds had 4 blocks each with 4 rooms. Generally, there were about 5 persons per room. In one of the rooms there were 6 men and 2 women. In one of the blocks the windows were obscured by a wood and iron lean-to shack against the wall. The compound was very dirty, crowded and fly ridden. The labourers slept on wooden double bunks.[403] Married quarters consisted of 8 blocks of 4 rooms accommodating one family per room. Each of these blocks was serviced by a urinal with two showers and privies. There was a kitchen that was full of smoke due to a defective chimney. To deal with the problem of inadequate and poor accommodation African workers built several shacks. These huts were considerably cleaner than the rest of the compound.[404]

There was no clear policy on allocating married quarters to married African workers. It is clear, however, that in the absence of a regulation guiding the allocation of married quarters to African workers, the decision was left to the discretion of local companies. At Mhlume Sugar Company, for instance, married quarters were allocated based on seniority. However, the company was

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[401] SNA, File 3049W, Notesof a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Mhlume Sugar Company, 5th February, 1960; SNA, File 3049W, Notesof a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Mhlume Sugar Company, 3rd August, 1962.

[402] SNA, File 3402/4, Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Mhlume Sugar Company, 19th February, 1960.

[403] SNA, File 3049W, Report on a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to the Mill site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April, 1963.

[404] SNA, File 3049W, Report on a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to the Mill site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April, 1963.

considering tightening the control and insisting on a Marriage Certificate or proof of 'lobola'.[405] The same system was used to allocate African workers at Havelock Mine in the 1960s. "Only labourers who were married through Christian rites or who had paid 'lobola' in full were admitted on a seniority basis to married quarters."[406] However, the Havelock Mine management acknowledged the challenge in determining the true marital status for African workers. Consequently, the mine management was keen for the government to introduce a system of registration of Swazi customary marriage at the District Offices to assist them in determining true marital status for the purposes of allocating married quarters. The mine management made it clear that in the absence of a regulation guiding the allocation of married quarters to Swazi workers, the determination of marriage by African custom was left to the tribal *Indvuna* concerned.[407] Even at Usuthu Pulp only senior African employees were eligible for married quarters.[408]

Apart from shortage of accommodation, living in poor conditions and being overcrowded in the compounds, African workers were also subjected to harsh discipline in the compounds. Each compound was under the jurisdiction of an *indvuna* and two company police who were responsible for discipline through the Section Manager to the Personnel Manager.[409] In the 1960s African compounds were regularly raided by Compound Managers**,** African *tindvuna* and company police.[410] Hlanze argues that the purpose of the raids was to spot and arrest squatters and culprits. Those arrested were taken to the police station. Visitors were permitted to stay in the compounds but could only stay for three days.[411] Local companies tightened the laws for

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[405] SNA, File 3402, Report of a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, accompanied by the District Commissioner, Siteki and Lisolenkhosi, to Mhlume Sugar Company, 5th February, 1960.

[406] SNA, File 3402, Report of the Visit by the Labour Officer, accompanied by the District Officer, Pigg's Peak, to Havelock Mine, 8th December, 1959.

[407] SNA, File 3049W, Notes of a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Havelock Mine, 28th October, 1963 and 7th November, 1963.

[408] SNA, File 3049W, Notes of a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Gege Forest Block,26th August, 1960.

[409] SNA, File 3402, Notes on the Visit by the Labour Officer, P.R. Forsyth Thompson, to Usuthu Forests, 10th February, 1957.

[410] SNA, File 3049W, Notes of a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Gege Forest Block, 26th August, 1960.

[411] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 68.

visitors by requiring workers to first acquire a written permission before bringing in visitors who were not allowed to stay for more than the stipulated number of days. To ensure that this policy was followed, local companies' police made periodic raids to identify offenders.[412] One of the responsibilities of compound foremen was guarding the compound all day and preventing illegal introduction of beer, keeping out spouses, and catching thieves who stole money from the workers.[413] Spouses found in the compounds at night were handcuffed by compound policemen.[414] This demonstrates that the African compounds were used as a form of controlling every aspect of workers' lives.[415] In spite of the tight security regarding spouses, workers managed to sneak them in.[416] Management at Peak Timbers, for instance, complained that there was an influx girlfriends and temporary women who did not have an official status.[417]

Ill-treatment in the compounds at the hands of compound managers and foremen was rife. A report written by Makhabane Bhembe in 1960 on Usuthu Forests suggests that workers objected strongly to the conditions in the compounds to which they were subjected. According to Bhembe, "there was a White man called 'Gcokasengwagwa' who was in charge of Compound A.2. He had been to four other compounds where his ill-treatment of labourers was known."[418] As *Ndabazabantu,* Bhembe reported the ill-treatment of workers at the hands of the company to the office of *Lisolenkhosi*. It shows that, as *Ndabazabantu,* he could not protect the workers from such ill-treatment. The least he could do was to report this to another body. There is no evidence, however, showing that this route was useful in protecting workers from ill-treatment.

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[412] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 68.

[413] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer on Jeremiah Simelane, 17th August, 1960.

[414] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer on Jeremiah Simelane, 17thAugust ,1960.

[415] See for instance,Turrell, "Kimberly…", p. 45; Van Onselen, *Chibaro*, p. 34.

[416] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 68.

[417] SNA, File 3029W, Report on a Visit by the Labour Officer to the Mill Site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April, 1963.

[418] SNA, File 3204/4, Report by Makhabane Bhembe, Ndabazabantu at Usuthu Forestry-CDC, to the Office of the King's Eye, Usuthu Forests, 20th August, 1960.

Swazi workers also complained that they were not well looked after at Ubombo Ranches. These workers were not happy that they were not entitled to medical care at the company when they were not feeling well. In a letter addressed to the Governor the workers complained that they did not have a Doctor to attend to their sicknesses. When the workers went to the Doctor for consultation because they were sick, the Doctor denied that the workers were sick and in some instances chased them away because they were sick.[419]

As if that was not enough, workers at Ubombo Ranches also alleged that their lives were endangered at the company. The workers claimed that Mr. Blam killed a person and bribed both the Magistrate and the Doctor by giving them £10 each. This led to the issue being brushed aside by the Magistrate when a complaint was laid by the workers. The information given to the Doctor by Mr. Blam, according to the workers, was that the killed person was in good health but was intoxicated with beer and marijuana. When the workers took matters to their own hands and took their colleague to hospital it was found that his skull and rib were fractured. Eventually, the person died. The workers were clearly not happy that no punishment was meted out to the killer.[420] While the management of Ubombo Ranches denied killing the alleged worker by giving false information, the cracked skull and broken rib obtained from the hospital indicated that the worker was killed.

Besides ill-treatment in the compounds, Swazi workers also encountered racial abuse. They were often targets of racial discrimination at the local companies. They were physically manhandled, insulted or swornat by European workers, some of whom imported into Swaziland racial prejudices against Africans. A case in point is that of Mbango Basner Dlamini who in 1960 appealed to the king through the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson. In Dlamini's own words,

> I was born in Swaziland. I ask you to ask for me from the king. What should I do if I am being sweared (sic) at for having done nothing wrong? There is a European employed by this company. This man ill-treats all Swazis working for this company. He swears at workers and calls them dogs, and the workers are

[419] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

[420] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

> dismissed from work without any valid cause. I ask you to find out for me from the king whether this is the right thing to be allowed to go on in Swaziland? The name of the European is Evans.[421]

In Swaziland, as in other parts of colonial Africa, it was common practice for Europeans to ill-treat Africans, particularly by uttering racial slurs and referring to African workers as 'boys'. Africans were called 'boys' only because they were black not because they were young.[422] Swazi workers challenged such ill-treatment at the companies by reporting these cases to the Labour Officer.[423] While the outcome of these complaints are unknown, it does not seem that the Labour Officer or even the king were able to help these workers.

Food rations

According to the Draft Regulations governing wage rates in Swaziland in the 1960s, employers were obliged to provide, at their own expense, rations, on a minimum weekly basis, to all workers earning less than 13/- per day. Since nearly all Swazi workers earned less than the minimum wage, local companies were obliged to provide food rations to these workers. As capitalist companies, local companies were bound to minimise costs by providing cheap, unbalanced food rations to African workers. It is not surprising that Swazi workers complained to the Labour Officer about food rations. The African workers' diet was not balanced, yet the workers did very difficult jobs. They ate mealie meal, beans, and drank *emahewu* (a fermented liquid made of mealie-meal) daily, but ate meat only once a week. Also, in most companies no additional rations were issued to African wives and children as this would have increased expenditure on feeding labour. The companies feared that an increase in rations for married families might encourage workers to bring their families with them. To most workers company rations were both inadequate and unpalatable. They responded by complaining about food rations to the Labour Officer, P.R. Forsyth Thompson,[424] and also by buying food from their

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[421] SNA, File 3402/4, Mbango Basner Dlamini to the Labour Officer, Mbabane, Swaziland, 20th August, 1960.

[422] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 70.

[423] SNA, File 3402/4, Mbango Basner Dlamini to the Labour Officer, Mbabane, Swaziland, 20thAugust, 1960.

[424] SNA, File 3402/4, Mbango Basner Dlamini to the Labour Officer, Mbabane, Swaziland, 20thAugust, 1960.

meagre wages to supplement inadequate company rations.[425] The workers were aware that they were entitled to adequate and palatable food, thus when the companies provided both inadequate and palatable food they complained to the Labour Officer.

The tables below give a synopsis of food rations that were given to African workers in the local companies in the 1960s. Evidently, the rations issued to the Swazi labourers were similarly poor in items as meat and other sources of proteins and protective foods.

Table 3

Food rations for African workers at Usuthu Forests in the 1950s

	Per Day	**Per Week**
Mealie Meal	2½ 1bs.	
Beans	3ozs.	
Salt	¾ oz.	
Meat		1½ 1bs.
Mahewu	1 Billy Tin	
Beer		¾ gal.

Source: *SNA, File 3094W, Notes of a Visiting Labour Officer to the Usuthu Forests, 10th December, 1957.*

Table 4

Food rations for African workers at Mhlume Sugar Company in the 1950s

	Per Day	**Per Week**
Mealie Meal	2¼ 1bs.	
Beans		1½ 1bs.
Flour		3ozs.
Meat		21bs.
Salt	as required	

Source: *SNA, File 3094W, Notes of a Visiting Labour Officer to Mhlume Sugar Company, 12-13thDecember, 1957.*

[425] SNA, File3049W, Labour Report from a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, and Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Mdziniso, to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15thOctober, 1962.

Beer was to be purchased from the beer hall on weekends for 1/- a gallon. However, a beer ration was proposed to be introduced.[426]

By 1960 food rations at Mhlume had slightly changed since more food rations had been added to the one that was given in the 1950s. Table 5 below shows the new scale for food rations in 1960.

Table 5

Weekly food rations for African Workers at Mhlume Sugar Company in the 1960s

	Per Week
Mealie Meal	18 1bs.married.
	14 1bs.single.
Meat	3 1bs.
Samp	2 1bs.
Sugar	1 1bs.
Beer	6 pints.
Flour	8 ozs.
Potatoes	1 1bs.
Salt	8 ozs.
Onions	8 ozs.

Source: *SNA, File 3094W, Notes of a Visiting Labour Officer to Mhlume Sugar Company, 3rd August, 1962.*

Table 6 below shows food rations at Peak Timbers in the 1960s on a weekly scale.

Table 6

Weekly food rations for African workers at Peak Timbers Limited in the 1960s

Food Ration	**Weekly Scale**
Mealie Meal	21 1bs.
Beans	1½ 1bs.
Flour	¼ 1bs.
Meat	2½ 1bs.
Salt	¼ 1bs.
Beer	1 pint.

[426] SNA, File 3094W, Notes of a Visiting Labour Officer to Mhlume Sugar Company, 12-13 December, 1957.

Source: *SNA, File 3094W, Report of a Visiting Labour Officer to the Mill Site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April, 1963.*

In addition, workers only had 5 pints[427] of *emahewu* for breakfast which they had at 5:30 a.m. Their next meal was during lunch at 12 noon in which they had porridge with soup or stew. This was followed by porridge at 5 p.m. There is no evidence showing that this porridge was taken with soup or stew. Those who worked during the night shift either had porridge or 5 pints of *emahewu* which was followed by porridge at 8:30 a.m.[428]

Table 7

Daily food rations for African workers at Havelock Mine in the 1950s and 1960s

Food Ration	**Men**	**Women**
Mealie Meal	22	16
Groundnuts	3	3
Sugar	1½	-
Beans	3	3
Vegetables	8	6
Beef	6-	
Bread	6 -	
Salt	1.5 -	
Coffee	0.13 -	

Source: *SNA, File 3029W, Report of the Visit of the Labour Officer, accompanied by the District Commissioner to Havelock Mine, 24th October, 1957.*

It is not clear which policy the mine followed when distributing food rations to African workers. It is clear, however, that male and female workers did not receive the same food rations. Male workers received more food rations than female workers. Also, workers who were occupying married quarters received dry rations as indicated in the above table while workers who were occupying single quarters were fed from the central kitchen. The mine provided pre-shift meals

[427] A pint is a measure of liquid that is equivalent to half a litre.

[428] SNA, File 3094W, Report of a Visiting Labour Officer to the Mill Site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April, 1963.

of soft porridge, bread and coffee in the morning and post-shift meals which were served between 12 noon and 6 p.m. In addition, each African labourer was entitled to a free ration of 2 pints of traditional beer per week. Additional beer could be bought from the Beer Hall between 4 and 7 p.m. for a third pint.[429] When the Labour Officer visited the mine in 1963 the food rations were not changed since his last visit in 1957 and 1962. The only notable few changes that were introduced by the mine included tins of *indengane* or soft porridge with bread and coffee which miners took for their mid-shift meal. The mine was going to introduce a drink that was rich in vitamins for underground miners since it was observed that workers underground needed a 'booster' at 10 a.m.[430] Clearly, the food that was given to African workers was not balanced since it comprised mostly of carbohydrates and lacked in proteins, vitamins and protective foods. Consequently, workers became less productive leading to the mine to contemplate introducing a drink that was rich in vitamins to give miners a booster. These food rations lacked a few essentials like fresh vegetables, vitaminised cereals and powder drinks. These were only provided by the Ngwenya Iron Ore Mine in addition to the food rations that were given to African workers by the other local companies. The food rations that were provided by the Ngwenya Iron Ore Mine were without a shadow of a doubt the best in the territory at the time.[431]

Workers also routinely protested to the Labour Officer, P.R. Forsyth Thompson, that Usuthu Forests gave them porridge for breakfast every day. They urged the company to give them *indengane* on some mornings instead of porridge. However, their complaints fell on the deaf ears of the Compound Manager, and their diet remained unchanged. On most occasions, the food was also insufficient for the number of workers and poorly prepared.[432] Similarly, Van Onselen has argued that one of the causes of the Wankie Colliery Strike in 1912 was insufficient

[429] SNA, File 3029W, Report of the Visit of the Labour Officer, accompanied by the District Commissioner to Havelock Mine, 24th October, 1957.

[430] SNA, File 3094W/23, Report of a Visiting Labour Officer to the Havelock Mine, 31st July, 1962. See also SNA, File 3094W/23, Report of a Visiting Labour Officer together with District Commissioner, Pigg's Peak and Assistant Labour Officer, to the Havelock Mine, 31st January, 1963.

[431] SNA, File 3049W, Notes of a Visit by the Labour Officer to Swaziland Iron Ore Development Company, 26 January, 1960.

[432] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer, 17 August, 1960.

food.[433] Swazi workers even though they did not go on strike, complained to the Labour Officer about insufficient food. The workers at Bhunya also routinely complained that "in the South African mines the Compound Manager [tasted] the food to see if it [was] properly cooked, at every meal", adding that "this [was] not done at Bhunya."[434] Clearly, Swazi workers at the company were well aware of what was happening in South Africa and wanted to be treated like other African workers in neighbouring South Africa. Like other workers elsewhere in the region, they were aware of the better conditions of work offered by South African companies.[435] However, the fact that their diet remained unchanged shows that these structures were not useful in redressing workers' grievances.

Hiring of foreign African labour

Swazi workers also registered complaints to the workers' councils about the hiring of foreign African labour at the expense of local workers. Government policy stated clearly that no foreign persons would be employed in the territory as long as there were Swazis who were willing and able to do the job concerned.[436] However, local companies sometimes decided not to adhere to this regulation and hired foreign African labour at the expense of Swazi labour. Swazi workers were aware of this policy and were quick to use the structure of imposed workers' councils to register their complaints about the violation of this policy. Mr. S.P. Nkuna, for instance, did not hesitate to write a letter to the District Commissioner about his lack of employment in the country. In his letter Mr. Nkuna wrote "I resided here in Swaziland I pay tax here, but I get no job, he always hire Transvaaler Clerks we Swazi we do not get job. But we pay taxes here they don't pay any tax here, please may you let me know if it's allowed."[437] Mr. Nkuna questioned why educated Swazis were overlooked for white collar jobs and foreign workers given a priority over them. At Mhlume Sugar Company the workers also complained that Swazi labourers were

[433] Van Onselen, "The 1912 Wankie Colliery Strike", pp. 277-289.

[434] SNA, File 3204/4, Labour Officer, 17 August, 1960.

[435] Phimister, "Origins and Aspects of…", p. 47.

[436] SNA, File 3402/4/56, Letter by Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson to S.P. Nkuna of Emvembili, 1st May, 1962.

[437] SNA, File 3402/4, Letter by S.P. NKuna to the District Commissioner, 8th February, 1962. See also SNA, File 3402/4, Letter from the District Commissioner to Manager Mhlume on dismissal of S. P. Nkuna, 22nd February, 1962.

being displaced by Nyasa workers who were paid from £3 - £4 a week. What is even worse is the fact that these Nyasa workers were paid wages that were more than double the wages that were paid to the dismissed Swazi workers.[438] Some Nyasa male workers were even employed with their women at Mhlume Sugar Company.[439] At Ubombo Ranches in a total workforce of 1,200 African labour, half the sugar mill employees were Mozambican employees.[440] Workers at Ubombo Ranches also complained that when Percivale, a European Compound Manager arrived at the company from Zululand he brought in Zulu workers to work as clerks in the company replacing the Swazi clerks he found at the company. What is even more surprising is the fact that these Zulu clerks were handed massive pays from £15 - £20 where Swazi clerks were paid from £5 - £7.[441] Still at Ubombo Ranches, the statistics provided by the report of the visiting Labour Officer in 1963 showed that the company's position on the labour proportion of Swazi labour to foreign labour had not changed following the previous visit to the company.[442] Between 13th December 1961 and 31st July 1963 the total foreign African labour had increased from 553 in 1961 to 735 in 1963. Remarkably, the Swazi labour force had decreased from 1, 566 in 1961 to 979 in July 1963. Even though the Swazi labour force had increased from 979 in July 1961 to 1, 072 in September 1963, the foreign African labour force also increased from 735 in July to 872 in September 1963. At Usuthu Pulp foreign African labour was also employed at the expense of Swazi labour. In addition, all four Swazi workers who were working at the company clinic were dismissed after the employment of a European lady. This European lady brought her servants with her to the company. Some of the dismissed workers were long serving workers since they had spent over ten years at the clinic.[443] This was despite that there was a regulation which prohibited the hiring of foreign labourers in the territory as long as there were Swazis who were willing and able to do the job concerned. Swazi workers were fully aware that

[438] SNA, File 3402/4, Annual Report of Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, for the year 1960.

[439] SNA, File 3402, Report of a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, accompanied by the District Commissioner, Siteki and Lisolenkhosi, to Mhlume Sugar Company, 5th February, 1960.

[440] SNA, File 3049W, Visit of Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to Ubombo Ranches, 12th July, 1960.

[441] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June, 1961.

[442] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on a Visit to the Ubombo Ranches Ltd, 30th October, 1963.

[443] SNA, File 3402/4, Makhabane Bhembe, Ndabazabantu, Usuthu Forests to the National Secretary, Swazi National Council. Lobamba, 3rd August, 1960.

policy was against the hiring foreign labour when there was local labour available and willing to do the same job. Thus, they were quick to challenge this practice which was very common among local companies. They manipulated the structure of workers' councils and place their complaints. However, the structure of workers' councils failed to help the workers. All the Labour Officer could do was to acknowledge the difficulty in enforcing the observance of this policy in every case. He further urged Swazis to prove that they made better employees.[444]

Early forms of worker consciousness, 1955-1962

The rise of expressing worker consciousness by appealing to the imposed workers' councils in 1955 did not mark the end of early forms labour withdrawal among Swazi workers. Some Swazi workers continued to engage in early forms of withdrawal even when there were worker representatives available to them to report their grievances. In 1960, there was still evidence showing that Swazi workers were individually withdrawing their labour when they felt unjustly treated. For instance, the Labour Officer, J.D. Wilson, observed that "the Swazi generally [had] a small economic compulsion to work, and were not given to complaint, preferring to express their dissatisfaction by packing up and going home."[445] The persistent use of early forms of labour withdrawal shows that workers did not have confidence in structures that were imposed to solve their problems. The workers had seen that these structures were useless in as far as redressing their grievances. History has it that withdrawal of labour is an expression of awareness of the individual as the last resort available to the worker when all else fails, particularly in the absence of group solidarity and collective bargaining. Early forms of labour withdrawal continued in Swaziland because the available structures were not effective in addressing workers' demands and interests. In such a situation, the worker resorts to the only thing that would protect them. They completely withdraw their labour, when they see that this is too extreme a measure, they withdraw partially. This is the only ammunition the worker has at their disposal to fight the work regime.

[444] SNA, File 3402/4/56, Letter from Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to A.J. Gule of Emvembili, 1st May, 1962.
[445] SNA, File 3402/4, Annual Report of Labour Officer, J.B. Wislon, for the year 1960.

Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated that the imposition of worker representatives to deal with workers' grievances of a petty nature gave rise to a new expression of worker consciousness in Swaziland between 1955 and 1962. The chapter has argued that these imposed worker representatives were ineffective since they failed to resolve workers' grievances because they represented the interests of the company, state and monarchy not those of the workers. Their introduction was meant to thwart group solidarity and collective bargaining among workers. The chapter has demonstrated, that the compound system which was intended to control and repress workers facilitated a new form of worker consciousness because the workers could then share their grievances and solutions on how to end their exploitation. It has been argued that during this period workers exploited the available structures by appealing unfair dismissals and reporting ill-treatment and racial abuse at the hands of the local companies, albeit individually. These structures were meant to pacify worker consciousness by representing workers' interests individually as opposed to collectively. Group discussions were limited to individual strategies.

As the F.C. Catchpole Report observes, this worker representative system had its own shortcomings. In practice this system expected workers to seek help from the structures that were imposed to protect monarchial, state and capital interests. Further, the people who were employed as workers' representatives save for the District Commissioners and Labour Officer were on the payroll of the companies in which they were allocated to. Workers were fully aware that these structures were not representative of their interests and aspirations. The workers viewed these people as representatives of employers, state and the king. Thus, some workers' grievances were not accorded the seriousness that they so much deserved. Discussing workers' complaints became a mere formality for these people. It also did not help that most of the traditional workers' representatives were not appointed for their industrial experience but for their political status. They were sometimes too tired to attend to workers' grievances after working hours.[446] Thus, they were viewed as incapable of presenting workers' grievances of a petty nature. Most *Ndabazabantu* were described as mediocre at their work and incapable of representing adequately the complaints of African workers. There was no fixed day for workers'

[446] See for instance, SNA, File 3402/4 - K.C. Riggs, General Manager, Mhlume Sugar Co. to District Commissioner, Siteki, 14th March, 1962.

complaints at the Compound Manager's office. Further, there is scant evidence showing that these workers' councils came back to the complainants to give them feedback.

The local companies also realized the ineffectiveness of the imposed workers' councils and manipulated the situation. In spite of the fact that policies were clear on African accommodation, hiring of foreign labour, food rations and dismissal of workers, local companies chose to violate these policies. Consequently, they did not only expose Swazi workers to unbearable working conditions, ill-treatment and racial abuse, poor and inadequate housing but also unfairly dismissed local workers, gave them meager wages, inadequate and un-nutritional food, and preferred foreign workers over Swazi workers. However, in spite of the conditions that Swazi workers were exposed to at the work place, they demonstrated awareness of their status and rights as workers and found strategies to insulate themselves from any kind exploitation that they encountered. Swazi workers were very quick to exploit the same structures that were meant to repress them and challenged unfair treatment by individually placing all sorts of work related complaints to these structures.

The chapter has demonstrated that early forms of labour withdrawal did not completely disappear but still persisted during this period. Since the worker representatives could not satisfy workers because they protected the interests of the company, colonial state and monarchy parties this led to the marginalisation of workers' interests. Most importantly, this is more than just the persistence of early forms of worker consciousness but a combination of strategies which indicate worker interests and aspirations. As the workers appealed to these structures for help, it became clear that these structures were not effective in terms of redressing workers' grievances. Ultimately, the unworkability of these structures also raised awareness among workers to realize the need to develop group solidarity and to collectively organise and bargain in order to end their exploitation which in turn led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

CHAPTER 6

A NEW DAWN: TRADE UNIONISM, STRIKES AND LABOUR UNREST IN SWAZILAND, 1962-1963

Introduction

Until 1962, African labour in Swaziland remained largely unorganized[447] since even though African workers engaged in group protest action in 1939 and 1944 at Havelock Mine, these strikes were not organized by a trade union. Worker consciousness manifested itself largely through individual strategies of labour withdrawal and directing complaints and appeals to the imposed worker representatives. However, the failure by the imposed worker representatives to satisfy workers in redressing low wages, poor working and living conditions ultimately led to the birth of trade unionism. Also, the growth of the Swazi labour force paralleled with the inevitable change in the proletarinisation of Swazi workers and their basic attitude towards wage employment contributed to the birth of trade unionism in the country. The workers had realized that labour issues could no longer be settled individually through the imposed workers' councils but through collective bargaining. Ultimately, from 1962 onwards, African workers in the local companies formed trade unions in order for their grievances and aspirations to be fairly represented. Immediately after their formation, these trade unions orchestrated major strikes in which nearly all the Swazi and African workers participated, in most instances successfully securing some concessions from indifferent company officials.

Firstly, the chapter examines the birth of trade unionism in the country against the background of anti-trade unionism and nationalist politics that swept Swaziland in the early 1960s. It outlines the important role that political parties, the government and the workers themselves played in the creation of trade unions. Secondly, through an exploration of the 1962 African workers' strike at Usuthu Pulp, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that the strike reflected a developed level of worker consciousness and solidarity both of which were largely absent in Swaziland in the

[447] Unorganized is used to mean individual as opposed to collective.

preceding years. This strike marked a new era of worker consciousness and also symbolized heightened awareness among Swazi workers. It demonstrated that Swazi and African workers would unite regardless of their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to articulate their grievances to the employer, and ultimately withdraw their labour en masse in order to force the company to redress their grievances. The workers saw the unions as their only mouthpiece and channel of communication through which they could air and champion their grievances at the company. Finally, the chapter analyses the 1963 labour unrest in the country. It examines the workers' demands against the background of low wages, poor working and living conditions in the major local companies. It argues that through their demands workers went beyond addressing their grievances regarding working and living conditions to broader political national issues including decolonization politics. After failed protracted attempts by the local police and traditional leaders the unrest was only ended when the colonial government brought in the Gordon Highlanders.[448] The chapter argues that the development of trade unionism in the early 1960s in Swaziland eventually led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Trade unionism and labour protests in Africa

Trade unionism has been one of the popular themes that have attracted the interest of several scholars. This has followed the general research trend on trade unionism that has taken place in different parts of the continent. Trade unionism emerged in the early 20th century in colonial Africa. Trade unions emerged in Southern Africa in the 1920s.[449] The first trade union to organize African workers was the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA) formed in 1917 and merged into the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in 1920.[450] Charles Orr argues that even though trade unionism emerged before World War I in British colonial West Africa, it was only after World War II that trade unionism began in colonial Central and East Africa. Further, Orr argues that African trade unions played a pivotal role in the struggle for independence, thus the labour movement appeared to enjoy a more effective political voice in

[448] The Gordon Highlanders were a British battalion that was stationed in Kenya.

[449] Van Onselen, "Worker Consciousness…", pp. 237-255.

[450] Pretorius, *A History of South Africa.*

Africa.[451] The chapter traces the development of trade unionism in Swaziland and how it eventually led to development of the Swazi labour movement.

The development of trade unions in Africa can be classified into three main periods. The first period is before the end of World War II; the second is from 1945 to 1960, and the third covers the period since 1961.[452] Wogu Ananaba discusses the challenges that trade unions were faced with in Africa particularly during the colonial period. He also discusses the involvement of trade unions in decolonization politics. Finally, Ananaba assesses the performance of trade unions in the post-colonial period in Africa. He then provides several reasons for trade unions' decline which range from ill-treatment of union leaders and members through coercive state policies, fragmentation and maladministration, indiscipline within the unions, abuse and misuse of funds to undemocratic procedures of the unions.[453] This chapter traces the development of trade unionism in Swaziland and assesses its contribution to the decolonization politics and the development of a labour movement.

In another study, Wogu Ananaba provides a detailed history of the Nigerian trade union movement from 1945 to the mid-1960s.[454] Similarly, Robin Cohen writing on labour and politics in Nigeria, analyses the role of Nigeria's labour federations and the importance of wage determination in the context of Nigeria's changing economy and power groups.[455] In the same vein, this chapter traces the development of the Swazi labour movement and its role on politics.

John Iliffe, writing on the creation of group consciousness among Tanzanian workers between 1929 and 1950, argues that the workers themselves were responsible for creating group solidarity. He argues, also, that group consciousness among workers has its roots on working and living conditions, the economic and social position of the workers as well as the workers'

[451] Orr, "Trade Unionism…", pp. 65-81. See also, Ananaba, *The Trade Union Movement in Africa,* pp. 1-8.

[452] Ananaba, *The Trade Union Movement in Africa*, pp. 1-8.

[453] Ananaba, *The Trade Union Movement in Africa*, pp. 1-8.

[454] Ananaba, *The Trade Union Movement*.

[455] Cohen, *Labour and Politics*.

response to their position.[456] Similarly, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that group consciousness among Swazi workers developed out of the conditions of work and the workers' economic and social positions. These workers saw themselves as groups with common interests and then organised to advance their interests, thus learning their need for unity. These workers began seeing themselves as a corporate entity whose interests were different from those of the employer (capital).

In a similar vein, Anirudha Gupta[457] argues that the development of trade unionism on the Zambian Copper belt resulted from the conflict between the workers and the government. To Gupta, the desire by the government to control the workers and the determination by the workers to resist such attempts led to the conflict between the two groups. However, the relationship between the workers and government was not always strained. Sometimes the workers collaborated with the government and the political parties.

Anthony Clayton and Donald Savage writing on Government and Labour in Kenya between 1895 and 1963, provide a rich, detailed history of the development of a wage labour force, government policy towards Kenyan labour and the growth and politics of Kenya's trade unions.[458] Still on Kenya, Richard Sandbrook deals with the organization of Kenyan trade unions, forms of worker activities and the conflict between union leaders and members.[459]

George Gona, writing on history of a trade union movement in East Africa, advocates for a strong labour movement to improve working and living conditions for East African workers. He campaigns for trans-nationalization of trade unionism.[460] Focusing on Kenya and Tanzania, Gona traces the development, prospects and challenges of the East African Trade Union

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[456] Iliffe, "The Creation of Group of Consciousness…", pp. 49-50.

[457] Gupta, "Trade Unionism and Politics…", p. 288.

[458] Clayton and Savage, *Government and Labour*.

[459] Sandbrook, *Proletarians and African Capitalism.*

[460] Gona, "Towards a Concrete East African Trade Union Federation…", pp. 273-293.

Federation during the colonial and post-colonial periods.[461] In tracing the development of trade unionism in Swaziland the chapter examines the contribution of trade unionism to the development of a labour movement.

Bienefeld traces the rapid expansion of trade unionism in Tanzania. He argues that the Tanzanian labour movement was powerful as it forced the colonial government to allow the formation of the influential Tanganyika Federation of Labour which became a major threat to the colonial government during the struggle for independence.[462] In the same vein, Stephen Goodman writes on trade unions and political parties in East Africa focusing on colonial Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. He argues that trade union movements in these countries were suppressed by their governments and fused together with government political parties. In spite of the historical differences between trade unions and political parties, Goodman, sees some collaboration between the two.[463]

Herbert Jauch writing on trade unions in Southern Africa argues that the labour movement in Southern Africa is faced with many challenges. The only solution to these challenges, according to Jauch, is for trade unions to design a clear definition of their role beyond working and living conditions and move on to broader socio-economic issues. He argues that in order for unions to regain the support and respect they enjoyed in the liberation movement periods, there is a need for a strong collaboration between unions and other organizations.[464]

Trade unionism has also captured the interest of Swazi scholars who have written on the theme from different perspectives. Nomethetho Simelane, tracing the development of trade unionism in Swaziland, argues that trade unions emerged in the early 1960s amid difficult conditions.[465] Hamilton Simelane, taking a similar approach to John Iliffe, argues that the development of trade

[461] Gona, "Towards a Concrete East African Trade Union Federation...".

[462] M.A. Bienefeld, "Trade Unions, the Labour Process…", pp. 553-593.

[463] S.H. Goodman, "Trade Unions and Political Parties…", pp. 338-345.

[464] J. Herbert, "Trade Unions…", pp. 1-8; E. Webster, "Essays in African…", p. 11..

[465] N.G. Simelane, "The State and the Working Class…

unionism in Swaziland was due to the workers' working and living experiences in the work place.[466] Nhlanhla Dlamini gives credit the role that was played by Michael Farlie in the development of trade unionism in Swaziland. Dlamini argues that despite the fact that trade unions were allowed in Swaziland through the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Proclamation Chapter 50 of 1942 of the laws of Swaziland, it was the arrival of British officials such as Michael Farlie that brought about changes. Farlie, the Secretary for Social and Political Affairs in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was especially noted for his role in encouraging the formation of trade unions.[467] Sifiso Hlanze argues that the colonial government through the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, encouraged the creation of trade unions in the country. To Hlanze, failure by the imposed worker representations to successfully redress low wages, poor working and living conditions for African workers led to the emergence of trade unionism in Swaziland.[468] Noxolo Mthimkhulu argues that the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) had an influence on both the workers and government in Swaziland. She argues that the SFTU was able to champion the workers' demands of improved wages as well as working and living conditions. In the process the SFTU was able to win some concessions for the workers thus gaining popularity.[469] In spite of the attention that trade unionism has attracted from several Swazi scholars, none of these studies have analyzed the history of trade unionism in Swaziland from the lens of its contribution to the development of a Swazi labour movement. There is a greater need, therefore, to conduct a study that will broaden our understanding on the trade union movement in Swaziland and how it eventually led to the development of the Swazi labour movement. This will help get empirical evidence to provide a broader analysis of the trade union movement in Swaziland.

African labour protests have also captured the interest of several scholars who have also analyzed these protests from different perspectives. Some scholars argue that labour protests are

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[466] Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development…".

[467] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition… ".

[468] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…".

[469] N. Mthumkhulu, "The Influence of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions on the Workers and the Government, 1964-2006', BA Project, University of Swaziland, 2010.

caused by the conflict between labour and capital. For instance, Henry S. Meebelo argues that Zambian workers went on strike because they wanted to improve their low wages and poor working and living conditions.[470] Other scholars view labour protests as a challenge to racial discrimination while some see them as synonymous to African nationalism or African decolonization. This supports the argument by Robin Cohen, Jean Copans and Peter C.W. Gutkind that, when strike action occurs, "it is revealed that workers not only perceive the extent of injustices, but they also have the courage and skill to organise themselves, and reject the authority of their leaders."[471]

Robert Rotberg argues that African labour protests were synonymous to African nationalism.[472] Writing on labour and politics in South Africa, Peter Alexander makes a similar observation when he argues that strikes in South Africa after 1948 were a challenge to apartheid.[473] African labour protests have also demonstrated that the role of a trade union sometimes goes beyond working and living conditions to wider national political issues. Some workers also had aspirations about the political dispensation of their country. In the case of the ICU, for example, the union became a political forum for Africans. Similarly, Frederick Cooper argues that labour protests in colonial West Africa were influenced by decolonization politics.[474] Peter Alexander also argues that there was a relationship between labour and politics in the South African strikes during the Second World War.[475]

Writing from a racial perspective Jean Suret-Canale argues that African labour protests in French West Africa were a direct challenge to racial discrimination which resulted in very few Africans

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[470] Mijere, a review of Meebelo, "African Proletariats…", p. 702.

[471] Cohen, Copans and Gutkind (eds.), *African Labour*, p. 17.

[472] Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism*, pp. 161-172.

[473] Alexander, *Workers, War and the Origins*, p. 8.

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

[475] P. Alexander, *Workers, War and the Origins of Apartheid: Labour and Politics in South Africa 1939-1948* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), p. 4; see also L. van der Walt, a review of P. Alexander, *Workers, War*, in: *Journal of African History*, Vol. 44, 1, (2003), pp. 168-169.

being promoted to managerial posts compared to Europeans.[476] Writing on African workers' protests at Usuthu Pulp, Nhlanhla Dlamini argues that the workers undertook their strike action because they were rejecting "the unequal race relations imposed by the company which put them in subordinate positions."[477] In light of these discriminatory policies, the union demanded the rapid promotion of black workers because there were fewer promotion opportunities for Africans at the company.[478] Ray Russon argues that "the demand for the promotion of Swazis was a clear challenge of colonial policies of racialism."[479]

African labour protests also demonstrated that consciousness among African workers had reached a new level whereby the unity of labour went beyond pan-ethnicism to mean all Africans. As Jeff Crisp argues, "workers were, therefore, beginning to identify themselves as an occupational community with common interests and enemies [and] were beginning to express their collective identity in the language of class and conflict".[480] The different perspectives are very useful and indicative of the fact that labour protests are a result of more complex dialectics which are beyond the conflict between labour and capital.

The rise of trade unionism in Swaziland

Despite the fact that trade unionism emerged in the 1920s in Southern Africa, it was not until the early 1960s that trade unionism emerged in Swaziland. Although worker consciousness had developed considerably by the 1960s, as demonstrated in the preceding chapters, trade union activity was still lagging behind.[481] Thus, trade unionism was a late phenomenon in Swaziland when compared to the Southern African region and the rest of the continent. The early 1960s also saw the rise of trade unionism in Swaziland as a number of trade unions were formed and

[476] Suret-Canal, "The French West African…", pp. 129-132.

[477] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 348.

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

[479] Russon, "Social Movements…", p. 76.

[480] J. Crisp, *The Story of an African Working Class: Ghanaian Miner's Struggles, 1870-1980* (London: Zed Press, 1984), p. 65, cited in: Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 347.

[481] See also, Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 349.

registered in the country.[482] These included the Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union (SPTWU) and the Builders' Trade Union (BTU) which were the first trade unions in Swaziland in 1962.[483] By the mid 1960s there were about 15 registered trade unions in the country.[484] These trade unions sought to represent workers and demand improved working and living conditions as well as improved wages on behalf of the workers.

Interestingly, trade unions had been allowed in Swaziland since 1942 through the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Proclamation Chapter 50 of 1942 of the laws of Swaziland[485] but had not been formed before 1962. For a long time trade unions were not allowed to operate in Swaziland despite the fact that legislation existed allowing for their existence since 1942.[486] Several factors were responsible for the late arrival of trade unionism in Swaziland. Firstly, from the outset, the introduction of this legislation for the establishment of trade unions in Swaziland, as it was done in the other High Commission territories, was not meant to promote trade unions but was introduced as a condition for receiving aid from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund.[487] It is clear that this legislation was not meant to help create a framework for peaceful industrial relations with the necessary machinery for collective negotiation of improved working and living conditions for the workers but it was meant to benefit employers. Secondly, there was general fear among local employers, the colonial state and traditional system that if encouraged trade unionism would develop along sinister lines. The argument was widely held at the time that instead of addressing bread and butter issues and workers' interests unions would become a weapon to develop political rights.[488] It was an open secret that trade unions in Africa

[482] TOS, "Strong Trade Unions and Bargaining are Government's Aim", 26 April 1962.

[483] TOS, "Mr. Marwick on Pulp Mill Strike: Two Trade Unions", 13 April 1962.

[484] Simelane, "The Evolving Role…", p.3. see also, SNA, File 3057A/19, Letter from Labour Officer inviting General Secretaries of the Trade Unions in the country, 14th May, 1964.

[485] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union, General Secretary, Martin Mdluli, to William Hastie, Managing Director, Usuthu Pulp Company, Mhlambanyatsi, Swaziland, 12 June 1963.

[486] *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1959*, p. 17; *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1961*, p. 15.

[487] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 398.

[488] Ministry of Labour Report, p. 34.

particularly during the 1960s tended to go beyond addressing issues affecting workers to develop politically by addressing wider societal, national issues. Carl Todd[489] claimed that Swaziland needed to be protected from the popular trade unionism that had developed among Africans elsewhere in Africa during this period. His argument was that the African Trade Union Movement tended to develop along sinister lines instead of focusing on the regulation of labour issues. Todd claimed that this was even more threatening for Swaziland because the Trade Union Movement would develop to the detriment of the traditional system. Todd wanted trade unions that would be tightly controlled by the state. Consequently, he suggested the introduction of a works council system which would only consider the petty things and exclude discussions on wages.[490] Carl Todd represents a group of influential white capitalists in Swaziland at the time who felt threatened by trade unionism ideology since they had capital investments. Thus, they supported the traditional system to restrict the growing tide of trade unionism in Swaziland. Thirdly, there was a prevailing anti-union attitude from both the employers and traditional system. Employers in particular resented trade unions because of their ability to challenge poor working and living conditions and low wages. As a result, employers in Swaziland always rejected attempts to regulate wages. Thus, wages for African workers in Swaziland remained low because in the absence of a wage regulation the payment of African employees was left to the discretion of individual employers.[491] The traditional system, represented by King Sobhuza II and Swazi National Council (SNC), hated trade unions for their ability to challenge the status quo and call for democracy. The system viewed trade unionism as a direct threat to its hegemony and influence in the country. The anti-union attitude began as early as the 1920s when King Sobhuza II disliked the manner in which individuals 'grabbed power' in the ICU in South Africa. The king felt that these individuals were not accountable to anyone. Thus, the system could not allow the formation of trade unions in Swaziland until at least the 1960s.[492] Further, the system resented trade unions because it believed they caused industrial unrest

[489] Carl Todd was the Secretary for the European Advisory Council at the time.

[490] Reconstituted European Advisory Council, Minutes of Meeting, May 1961, p. 41.

[491] Dlamini, "Race Relations in Swaziland…, p. 82.

[492] For a similar view, see Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 399.

through strikes.[493] King Sobhuza II's views on trade unions were detailed in his discussion with around 40 employers representing about 15 230 workers at Masundvwini Royal Residence in March 1963. The king said that in other countries trade unions watched the interests of workers and were sometimes able to enforce their wishes through strikes. He said if workers were not paid what they deserved they went on strike. The king revealed that he had always felt unhappy about this because if the wage demand was met the workers would not say thank you. He sais he feared that once the workers' demands were met they were bound to make more demands later and probably causing another strike. The king feraed that this would go on like an unending cycle until the employer's patience was exhausted and would eventually decide they cannot carry on like and this refuse to pay. He felt there was no real understanding between the workers and their employers.[494] In his own words the King Sobhuza II stated:

> Although you people are used to strikes – it is in your tradition – we feel that it is not the right way of doing things… All were aware that if labour demanded increases in wages at the beginning of a business the enterprise would fail. These labourers would have killed the goose that lays the golden egg. They would suffer after the goose had been killed. We feel that this is not a happy state of affairs. People should come together and amicably discuss these things… That is something that has always worried me about trade unions and their way of doing things.[495]

By revealing his negative attitude towards trade unions and workers' demands for wage increments, the king actually encouraged employers in the country to continue to exploit workers and pay them low wages. In the absence of a machinery to regulate wages the employers knew they had support from the king of the Swazi people, thus they continued to use their discretion to under pay workers. Lastly, the European Advisory Council which was an arm of the traditional system was also against trade unionism in the territory. They council members strongly objected any attempts to implement the trade union legislation in 1952.[496] Consequently, a works council system was imposed and could only deal with matters of a petty nature. Thus, the works council

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[493] Winter, "The Post-Colonial State…", p. 38.

[494] TOS, Ingwenyama on Strikes", 29 March 1963.

[495] TOS, Ingwenyama on Strikes", 29 March 1963.

[496] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 399.

system assumed the role of trade unions negotiating on behalf of the workers, although the system did not represent fully the interests and aspirations of the workers.

The late development of trade unionism[497] in Swaziland was not entirely dependent on the attitude and feelings of the employers, state and the traditional system but mostly on the growth and character of the workforce itself. From the mid-1940s to the early 1960s there was a considerable growth in the number of the labour force in the country which subsequently led to the growth and character of the workforce. As Hamilton Simelane argues, "the growth and expansion of employment opportunities in Swaziland after the war gave rise to worker consciousness that in turn led to new forms of labour organization."[498] There was also a greater increase in the number of Swazi workers who no longer preferred working in South Africa since there were local companies who could match the South African companies in terms of wages and working and living conditions.[499] This does not suggest, however, that during this period Swazis were no longer migrating to work in the South African mines and plantations. Many Swazi workers were still migrating to work in South Africa.

Further, there was an influx of foreign African workers, notably, from South Africa, Mozambique and Malawi. Most of these expatriate Africans had industrial experience and some of them were very instrumental towards the formation of trade unions in the country's companies. As Bonner, Hyslop and van der Walt argue, individual African workers were able to transport worker consciousness and or trade union ideas from some regions of Southern Africa to other parts of the region.[500] While the role of these expatriate Africans was significant towards the formation of trade unions in the country, credit is also given to the Swazi workers who eventually rejected the imposed worker representation system that was prevalent in the local companies. These workers were unhappy that the system did not fully represent their interests and aspirations, thus it benefited the employers. As H.S. Simelane argues, the development of

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[497] Late is when comparing the emergence of trade unionism in Swaziland with the emergence of trade unionism in the Southern African region and the rest of the African continent.

[498] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 175.

[499] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland…, p. 16.

[500] P. Bonner, J. Hyslop and L. van der Walt, "Rethinking Worlds of Labour…", pp. 144-159.

trade unionism in Swaziland was due to the workers' working and living experiences in the work place.[501]

In particular, the developments in mining and agriculture created more jobs and eventually increased levels of proletarinisation among the Swazi working class. During the 1960s the number of Swazis engaged in wage employment increased significantly. In 1962, for instance, in a total working age population of 138, 000, about 37, 400 were engaged in wage employment. This constituted about 52% of the labour force to the total working age population.[502] This development gave the workers the bargaining strength and eventually led to heightened forms of worker consciousness. The workers realized that they had common interests as a collective unit. As Jeff Crisp argues, "workers were…beginning to identify themselves as an occupational community with common interests and enemies. Moreover, they were beginning to express their collective identity in the language of class and conflict."[503] Thus, as a group they could not only safeguard their interests as workers but also redress poor working and living conditions as well as low wages. In essence, trade unionism did not emerge in Swaziland before 1962 only because the character and growth of the workforce had not yet developed to embrace group solidarity. It should be remembered also that industrialization was a late phenomenon in Swaziland, thus the character of the workforce was still at an embryonic stage and growing gradually especially under different conditions and hurdles. All forms of worker consciousness including trade unionism emanate from the workers' experiences from the work place. Once the character and growth of the workforce had developed to reach group consciousness trade unionism became inevitable whether or not employers or the state or the monarchy supported it.

Despite these challenges that prevented its development trade unionism in Swaziland eventually emerged in 1962. The development of trade unionism quickly removed any thoughts that employers, the colonial state and traditional system had an obligation over the workers with regards to formation of trade unions. Three key factors were responsible for the rise of trade

[501] Simelane, "Capitalism and the Development…". See also Iliffe, "The Creation of Group of Consciousness…", pp. 49-50.

[502] R. Levin, *When the Sleeping Grass Awakens: Land and Power in Swaziland* (Cape Town: Creda Press, 1997), 61.

[503] J. Crisp, *The Story of an African Working Class*, p. 65.

unionism during this period. Firstly, continued poor working and living conditions as well as low wages for African workers made them to realize the bargaining strength of group solidarity in redressing their problems. The F.C. Catchpole Report of 1960 on labour relations in Swaziland also captured the continued poor working and living conditions and low wages for Swazi workers. For instance, the Report pointed out that the conditions of workers in Swaziland were extremely bad.[504] Further, living conditions continued to deteriorate as African workers were housed in poor and inadequate accommodation.[505] The Catchpole Report also criticized the low wages that were paid to Swazi workers, and in particular the lack of machinery for negotiating wages in the territory.[506] Clearly, during this period Swazi workers were far from being happy with the working conditions in Swaziland. This was aggravated by the lack of well established channels for airing their grievances. Secondly, the failure by the imposed workers' councils to redress workers' problems made them to create trade unions since they realized that this system was not representing the interests and aspirations of the workers. The system had several important defects as demonstrated in the preceding chapter. In turn this was bound to have a lasting effect on the workers as they resented the failure by the workers' councils to improve their poor working and living conditions and low wages. Finally, trade unionism developed among African workers in Swaziland because the character and growth of the workforce had developed to embrace group solidarity as a bargaining tool to redress poor working and living conditions including low wages. The early 1960s was a period in Swazi history when worker consciousness evolved from being largely individual and developed to embrace group consciousness.

Seeing the inevitable especially the rapid growth of a large permanent industrialized labour force together with the changes in the basic attitude towards wage labour on the part of Swazi workers the colonial government was forced into creating conditions for the emergence of trade unions in the country. Even the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, in 1961 predicted the rise of trade unionism

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[504] F.C. Catchpole, Report on Labour Legislation in Swaziland, Mbabane,12 May, 1960, p.7: cited in M. Fransman, Labour, Capital and the State in Swaziland, 1962-1977.

[505] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", p. 401.

[506] F.C. Catchpole, Report on Labour Legislation in Swaziland, Mbabane,12 May, 1960, p.7: cited in M. Fransman, Labour, Capital and the State in Swaziland, 1962-1977.

in the territory.[507] In 1962 the colonial government through the Labour Officer encouraged the creation of trade unions in the country. Wilson stated that "the Swaziland Government aims to encourage 'strong and healthy' trade unions and favours collective bargaining on wages and working conditions."[508] This was a sudden change of heart by the colonial government which had previously supported the imposed worker representation system at the expense of trade unions. As the Catchpole Report predicted, the workers' council system quickly broke down.[509] Coincidentally, in England the Labour Party was in power during this time and influenced the colonial government to introduce trade unions in Swaziland.[510] Labour unions were viewed as one of the modern democratic structures the British sought to introduce to the country.[511] The reorganization of the Labour Department in Swaziland happened because the metropolitan government wanted trade unions. The colonial government wasted no time in bringing British officials such as Michael Farlie[512] to encourage the formation of trade unions in the country.[513] This sudden change of heart by the metropolitan government was evident when it encouraged the formation of trade unions because attempts to regulate wages before had failed as long as employers rejected it.[514] The rejection of the regulation of wages was one of the reasons wages for African employees remained poor because their payment was left to the discretion of individual employers.[515] However, with the growth of industries and a labour force in the colony, the government had no choice but to move on with the growing industrial needs. In Brian Marwick's words, Resident Commissioner in Swaziland at the time, "the advent of trade unionism in Swaziland emphasizes the necessity for employers to recast their approach to labour

[507] Minutes of Meeting of Reconstructed European Advisory Council, May, 1961.

[508] TOS, "Strong Trade Unions and Bargaining are Government's Aim", 26 April 1962.

[509] Booth, *A Dictionary*, p. 41.

[510] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 350.

[511] Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 224.

[512] Michael Farlie was the Secretary for Social and Political Affairs in Britain between the late 1950s and early 1960s.

[513] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition… ", p. 353.

[514] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 157.

[515] Dlamini, "Race Relations …", p. 82.

relations generally and in particular to the provision of adequate negotiation machinery between workers and management."[516] African workers at the country's industries seized this opportunity and began creating trade unions in the early 1960s.[517]

The birth of trade unionism in Swaziland against the background of nationalist politics that swept the country in the early 1960s was an interesting coincidence. The advent of trade unionism coincided with the formation of political parties in the country. Thus, some scholars have suggested that trade unions in Swaziland in the 1960s could be said to have derived their ideological livelihood from political parties.[518] This suggestion denies the initiative that Swazi workers took to bargain collectively. Although evidence suggests that political parties influenced their members to form and organize trade unions.[519] The onus of creating trade unions remained with the workers. Political parties only seized the opportunity and extended their political agenda to the workers once trade unions had been formed. Their influence begins to be more evident during the wave of strikes in the country in 1963 which led to the labour unrest.

Even though the primary purpose of a trade union according to Rosaria Burchielli, is to advocate for, and protect the interests of exploited workers using collective action,[520] Helen Bradford's study on the ICU clearly demonstrates that the role of a trade union tends to go beyond work related issues to political issues. Bradford shows that workers also exhibited aspirations about the wider societal issues, particularly politics.[521] Thus, from the outset there was a close

[516] TOS, "Mr. Marwick on Pulp Mill Strike: Two Trade Unions", 13 April 1962.

[517] TOS, "Mr. Marwick on Pulp Mill Strike: Two Trade Unions", 13 April 1962. ; *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1962*, p. 5.

[518] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 77.

[519] Russon, "Social Movements and Democratic Struggles in Swaziland" in: L. Sachikonye (ed.), Democracy, Civic Society and the State: Social Movements in Southern Africa", p. 76.

[520] R. Burchielli, "The Purpose of Trade Union Values: An Analysis of the ACTU Statement of Values", *Journal of Business Ethics,* Vol. 68, 2 (2006), p.137.

[521] H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1942-1930* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987).

relationship between trade unions and political parties. Similarly, labour in Swaziland sought to redress low wages and poor working and living conditions through collective bargaining. The trade unions, on behalf of the workers also depicted workers' aspirations about the political dispensation of the country. This was an advantage to the political parties who sought to extend their nationalist agenda to the workers through labour unions. The political parties believed that by helping workers in their struggle for improved wages and working and living conditions workers would reciprocate the favour through supporting nationalist parties.

The attitude of the trade unions in Swaziland towards political parties was both collaborative and conflicting. Some of the workers felt that joining the nationalist struggle for independence was worthwhile as it would help them put an end to their exploitation at the hands of the colonial companies. These workers felt that if they supported political parties, their grievances would be addressed since the parties would join them in their struggle for improved wages and working and living conditions. Other workers, however, felt that unions should not meddle in politics and instead stick to improving wages, working and living conditions. Henry S. Meebelo demonstrates this point well by arguing that the relationship between political parties and workers in Zambia was both collaborative and conflicting. He argues that although some workers felt the union should support the struggle for independence "the dominant trend in the labour movement was economism."[522] The political parties in Swaziland, particularly the Ngwane National Liberation Congress (NNLC), welcomed the formation of labour unions to champion their political goals. This political party offered a helping hand to the workers and joined the workers' struggle for improved living and working conditions as well as wages.[523] The party also influenced their members to organise and support the trade unions in the companies.[524] By helping the employees, political parties sought to mobilize the support of the working class in the struggle against the traditionalist on the eve of independence.

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[522] N.J. Mijere, a review of H.S. Meebelo, "African Proletariats and Colonial Capitalism: The Origin, Growth and Struggles of the Zambian Labour Movement to 1964" *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 25, 4 (1987), p.702.

[523] N.G. Simelane, "Evolving Role and Status of Trade Unions in Swaziland," A Paper presented at the International Conference on Trade Unions and National Development in Southern Africa, 27-31 January, 1981, p. 2.

[524] R. Russon, "Social Movements and Democratic Struggles in Swaziland" in: L. Sachikonye (ed.), Democracy, Civic Society and the State: Social Movements in Southern Africa", p. 76.

From the onset, the labour unions faced many challenges. Both colonial companies and the traditional system had a negative attitude towards trade unions.[525] Expatriate firms in Swaziland hindered the progress of the newly formed unions.[526] Some companies refused to recognize the unions until a few years after their formation even though they were formed and registered legally under the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Proclamation Chapter 50 of 1942 of the laws of Swaziland.[527] In addition, the traditional system was against trade unions in the country because they feared that trade unions tended to develop along sinister lines.[528] They feared that, instead of bringing about the regulation of industrial interests in the hands of their organizers, trade unions would become a weapon with which workers would challenge the hegemony and influence of the system and fight for political rights.[529] In spite of these difficulties, however, the unions persevered and were able to negotiate new wages and conditions of service for African employees even before some of them were officially recognized by the companies.[530] This was because of the bargaining strength of group solidarity which the unions provided. Workers fully exercised their right to withdraw their labour en masse, thus forcing the companies to redress their grievances.

The creation of trade unions marked a new era of worker consciousness in Swaziland and among Swazi labourers during the early 1960s. Trade unionism became a new manifestation of worker consciousness in the country. Hitherto 1962, it was the local companies, the colonial sate and

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[525] Booth, "Capitalism and the Competition…", p. 166; Wiehahn Report, Ministry of Labour Report of the Commission of Inquiry into all Aspects of Labour Relations in Swaziland, pp. 34-5.

[526] Wiehahn Report, Ministry of Labour Report of the Commission of Inquiry into all Aspects of Labour Relations in Swaziland, p. 33.

[527] For instance, the Timber and Pulp Workers' Union was only recognized by the Usuthu Pulp Company in 1964 even though it was formed and registered legally in 1962. For more information, see, TOS, "Pulp Company Recognizes Trade Union", 15 May 1964.

[528] TOS, "Trade Unions Discussed in Wages Report", 13 March, 1964; *Wiehahn Report, Ministry of Labour Report of the Commission of Inquiry into all Aspects of Labour Relations in Swaziland,* p. 34.

[529] Wiehahn Report, *Ministry of Labour Report of the Commission of Inquiry into all Aspects of Labour Relations in Swaziland,* p. 34.

[530] The Timber and Pulp Workers' Union was able to force the Usuthu Pulp Company in 1962 to attend to the workers' grievances securing some concessions for the workers including negotiating new wages and conditions of service.

traditional system which initiated the creation of organs to sort out disputes in case of conflict between labour and capital. Instead of demonstrating their consciousness through early forms of withdrawal or placing complaints as demonstrated in the preceding chapters Swazi workers now sought to challenge low wages and poor working and conditions through collective bargaining.

Labour unions, political parties and pre-independence politics in Swaziland

The 1960s was a period in Africa that was characterized by intensified political activity with some countries in the continent gaining independence while others were demanding it from the colonialists.[531] Swaziland, like many other African states is to some extent, a making of European imperialism that began in 1903 and lasted until 1967. This European imperialism manifested itself in political domination and economic exploitation of the African people and resources. From the 1950s onwards, Africans began to demand independence and freedom in order to have a say in the affairs and governance of their countries. They formed nationalist political parties that articulated African grievances and mobilized the masses to challenge the colonial establishment. Swaziland, like other African countries, was not immune to this political development. Consequently, the period leading to independence in Swaziland witnessed increased political activity.[532] The spirit of nationalism that dominated Swaziland during this period was not an isolated episode; it should be understood from the lens of the larger perspective of the nationalism that took place in the African continent as a whole. From 1960 onwards, two key factions were calling for independence from Britain in Swaziland. On the one hand, there was the traditional system led by King Sobhuza II and the SNC. On the other hand, there were radicals who were also known as the progressives[533] who comprised mostly political parties' members, educated elites and trade unionists. When it became clear that Swaziland would be eventually granted her independence the two factions competed over which should take over power and lead the country to independence.[534] Consequently, there was a conflict between

[531] Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 223.

[532] N.G. Simelane, "Evolving Role and Status of Trade Unions in Swaziland", A Paper Presented at the International Conference on Trade Unions and National Development in Southern Africa, 27-31 January, 1981, p. 2; M.M. Mhlanga, "Efforts of the Civil Society Towards a Democratic Swaziland Since 1973", BA Project, University of Swaziland, 2002, p. 9.

[533] Simelane, "Political Reforms …", p. 2.

[534] Winter, "The Post-Colonial State…", p. 32.

these two factions because each faction thought it was the rightful one to attain independence on behalf of the Swazi nation.[535]

The traditionalists were against the western democratic style of leadership and pan-Africanism. They considered themselves as the rightful ones to lead the Swazi people to independence. "They felt legitimacy was conferred to them by custom and tradition and that this qualified them to occupy the expanding political space created by the decolonization processes."[536] The radicals comprised educated elites who formed political parties in the 1960s with a view to shaping the political sphere and eventually capturing power at independence. They were not in favour of the traditional monarchical system but embraced a more democratic system based on pan-Africanism. They proposed a full implementation of the Westminster Constitution fused with modern ideologies of African nationalism in Swaziland. They were therefore viewed as a threat by those in favour of the traditional system to their governance of the country in post-independence. Using the Kwame Nkrumah experience in Ghana, the radicals sought to use political parties to gain the support of the Swazi people and win the struggle for leading Swaziland to independence. They then began forming political parties in the early 1960s to challenge the conservative Swazi traditionalists and lead the country to independence.[537] In the early 1960s a number of political parties were formed in Swaziland. They include the Swaziland Progressive Party (SPP) which was founded in 1960[538], the Swaziland Democratic Party (SDP) and the Ngwane National Liberation Congress (NNLC) which were founded in 1962 respectively.[539] Each of these political parties aimed to draw support from the working class and defeat the traditional system and then govern the country. Thus, it appears that from the outset, the alliance between labour and political parties was inevitable. Despite the fact that the traditional system was initially against the formation of political parties and preferred instead the

[535] Simelane, "Political Reforms..."

[536] H. Dlamini, "Constitutional Developments in the Kingdom of Swaziland 1960-2005" PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2016, pp. 45-57..

[537] Dlamini, "Constitutional Development…", pp. 45-48..

[538] Simelane, "Political Reforms…", p. 4; see also B. Matsebula, "A History of the Swaziland Progressive Association, 1929-1960", BA Project, University of Swaziland, 2007.

[539] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 76.

traditional methods of choosing representatives, it ultimately formed its own political party, the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM).[540] Although the advocates of the system mistrusted political parties and constitutional government since they felt they were incompatible with Swazi law, custom and tradition, they sought to protect the system's interests and formed their own political party in 1964.[541]

The British government had set the formation of political parties and democratic elections as conditions for granting independence to Swaziland. They introduced a Westminster Constitution allowing for multi-party elections.[542] Subsequently, Swaziland, like other African states, also achieved her independence through political parties and democratic elections. Eventually, the IMN won both the 1967 and 1968 elections and led Swaziland to independence. It also secured the transfer of power to the traditional system, which was a rare occurrence in the history of decolonization in Africa. The NNLC remained in opposition, making Swaziland a liberal democratic country.[543] The NNLC managed to forge an alliance with a majority of the Swazi workers and this was proved in the 1963 labour unrest which the country witnessed where the NNLC provided leadership and support to the workers' strikes.[544]

The 1962 Usuthu Pulp strike

On Friday the 6th of April 1962, Swaziland witnessed the first ever strike to be organized by a trade union. This strike not only demonstrated a new era of worker consciousness but also became a precursor to a series of workers' strikes that took place throughout the country for the most part of early 1963. The newly formed Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union organized a major strike in which virtually all the African workers at the Pulp Mill participated[545] successfully securing some concessions from indifferent company officials. For

[540] Winter, "The Post-Colonial State…", p. 32.

[541] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 10.

[542] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 10.

[543] S. Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region: From one Party State to Multi-Party Democracy in Zambia and Lessons for Swaziland", p. 89.

[544] See for instance, Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 76.

[545] The striking Pulp Mill workers were joined by a section of the forest workers. See also TOS, "Mr. Marwick on

three days production at the mill was almost at a complete standstill. During the strike the mill was only kept going by the European staff. The workers only returned to work on Monday, 9th April after management had promised to seriously consider their grievances following two meetings that were held by company officials with the union representatives on Saturday and Sunday.[546] This was barely a month after the union was formed. How could this embryonic union organize and orchestrate such an effective strike? As Eddie Webster argues, "the ultimate weapon the worker has in collective bargaining is the right to withdraw his labour, to strike".[547] Similarly, African workers at Usuthu Pulp used their weapon and withdrew their labour en masse in an attempt to end their exploitation.

Figure 9. A Photograph showing the Mill at Usuthu Pulp Company

Source: http://www. chrislang.org

Pulp Mill Strike", 13 April 1962.

[546] TOS, "Mr. Marwick on Pulp Mill Strike", 13 April 1962; *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1962*, p. 6.

[547] Webster, "Background to the Supply…", p. 13.

The Usuthu Pulp Strike of 1962 has captured the interests of several Swazi scholars[548] who have analyzed the strike from different perspectives. To Hamilton Simelane the Usuthu Pulp Strike of 1962 was a result of conflict between labour and capital and also a demonstration of the start of effective organisation of Swazi workers.[549] Similarly, Martin Fransman puts emphasis on the conflict between labour and capital when examining the 1962 Usuthu Pulp strike.[550] Nhlanhla Dlamini approaches the strike from racial discrimination point of view. He argues that African workers at Usuthu Pulp went on strike because they were challenging discriminatory policies and practices at the company. [551] Sifiso Hlanze argues that through the strike workers demonstrated that they were creators of their own destiny in spite of the harsh conditions that they were exposed to.[552] At another level, the strike demonstrates the development of worker consciousness among the workers from predominantly individual strategies to largely group solidarity. Although the era and subject continues to attract the attention of some scholars of the country, a detailed examination here is uncalled for. It is important, however, to stress that the labour situation on the Pulp Company remains central to the story. Further, while the contribution of these scholars is undoubtedly useful to the analysis of the strike, none of these scholars, however, have analyzed the strike from the lens of its contribution to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Although the strike was ignited by the dismissal of two workers of South African origin, Francis Mbelu and an unidentified worker,[553] the root causes were persistent low wages and unfair dismissals.[554] These causes were old grievances which were one of the main sources of

[548] See for instance, Simelane, "Capital Penetration …"; G. Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…"; Fransman, "The State and Development…"; N. Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…"; Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…".

[549] Simelane, "Capital Penetration …", p. 155.

[550] M.J. Fransman, "The State and Development in Swaziland, 1960-1977", PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 1978, pp. 200-203.

[551] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 348.

[552] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…"

[553] TOS, "Sequel to the Pulp Mill Strike", 27 April 1962.

[554] TOS, "Statement by Pulp Management on the Strike", 13 April 1962.

dissatisfaction among workers at the company between 1955 and 1961[555] which the imposed worker representatives failed to redress. In 1962 workers were still grappling with low wages and unfair dismissals.

By 1962 wages for African employees at the company were very low, particularly if compared with those of their European counterparts. Archival data also reveal that Africans at the company were paid 9 cents per hour by 1962[556] which was very low. A former employee also testified that "wages for Blacks at the company were very low. In 1962 the company was paying me 4 cents per hour."[557] Even the company management conceded that wages for Africans were low, thus during the strike the management promised the union members that "the minimum standard daily wage proposed would be equal to or better than good employers were paying or likely to pay locally to Africans."[558] During the negotiations with union the company stated that it "was already considering increases in minimum rates of pay and improved wage progression periods."[559] Low wages for Africans was one way through which capitalist companies minimized costs and maximized profits. Phimister argues that the profitability of capitalist companies hinged heavily on large supplies of cheap labour.[560] Consequently, the workers decided to withdraw their labour en masse in order to force the company to increase their wages. As Webster argues, "the ultimate weapon the worker has in collective bargaining is the right to withdraw his labour, to strike".[561] The union's demand for a wage increase demonstrates that the workers were aware that their wages were not commensurate with their efforts at the company. The strike was a challenge to the company's policy of segregated salary scales and workers

[555] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 85.

[556] SNA, File 3402/4, The District Commissioner to the Personnel Officer, Usuthu Pulp Company, Mhlambanyatsi, 22 August 1962.

[557] Interview with Isaiah Dlamini, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

[558] TOS, "Statement by Pulp Management on the Strike", 13 April 1962.

[559] TOS, "Statement by Pulp Management on the Strike", 13 April 1962.

[560] See for instance, I. Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle* (London, 1988), p. 23.

[561] Webster, "Background to the Supply…", p. 13.

wanted to force the company to raise their wages and make them not only commensurate with their tasks but also comparable with those of the whites.[562]

Unfair dismissals were also the root cause of the strike. It was also a common practice for companies in Swaziland to dismiss African workers arbitrarily and without following the proper channels. As already stated above, the strike was ignited by the recent dismissal of two workers, Francis Mbelu and another unidentified worker.[563] The management of the company also confirmed that the dismissal of the two men was one of the causes of the strike.[564] The two employees had been instrumental during the creation of the union at the company. Former employees unanimously recalled that the company fired these two because they were involved in starting the union for black workers at the company. The company was unhappy with the formation of the union and wanted to get back at the people who formed the union by dismissing them. It was not clear what offence these two had committed.[565] The workers demonstrated their solidarity with their members who were being victimized for their trade union activity. Thus, they were quick to challenge the company to end such practice. As Hlanze argues, "by dismissing these two employees for their involvement in the creation of the union the company was getting rid of potentially dangerous workers."[566]

The strike was also "an attempt to draw attention to old grievances which [workers] claimed management had not remedied."[567] The union tabled a list of about five demands to the management of the company before the strike. One of the old grievances included placing deserving African employees in low positions. The workers were challenging the promotion policy of the company which favoured European employees at the expense of African

[562] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report from a visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson and Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Mdziniso to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962.

[563] TOS, "Sequel to the Pulp Mill Strike", 27 April 1962.

[564] TOS, "Sequel to the Pulp Mill Strike", 27 April 1962.

[565] Interview with Shile Dlamini, Ndinda, 3 November 2018; Interview with Isaiah Dlamini, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

[566] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 86.

[567] TOS, "Mr. Marwick on Pulp Mill Strike", 13 April 1962.

employees. The workers were aggrieved by the low-level jobs they occupied which led low wages. Consequently, Europeans earned wages that were far higher than those of their African counterparts because they held supervisory positions, particularly due to the promotion policy pursued by the company.[568] The workers demanded the company to desist from its racial policy of placing whites in supervisory positions, while placing blacks in subordinate positions, even when they were equally qualified and sometimes even more experienced. As Dlamini argues, African workers at Usuthu Pulp went on strike partly because they were challenging discriminatory policies and practices at the company.[569] Also, Ray Russon argues that "the demand for the promotion of Swazis was a clear challenge of colonial policies of racialism."[570] An ex-employee of the company testified that "Africans were never promoted to high positions at the company. Supervisory positions were positions only held by the whites. It did not matter whether these whites were qualified or not, on their arrival at the company they were simply put in top positions."[571] This was due to the job colour bar issue which reserved supervisory positions for European workers at the expense of African workers. There was no written law about it, but this is what it was in practice. As Vickery argues "your carpenter, your bricklayer, all the tradesmen, they were all jobs held by whites."[572] Africans were clearly not happy with the lack of career advancement opportunities, thus they demonstrated a feeling of frustration and dissatisfaction. The workers, aggrieved by the dearth of promotion opportunities which in turn led to low wages, went on strike to force the company to end its policy of segregated promotion which favoured the whites rather than blacks. This supports Jean Suret-Canale's argument that African labour protests in French West Africa were challenging racial discrimination which resulted in very few Africans being promoted to managerial posts compared to Europeans.[573]

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[568] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report from a visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson and Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Mdziniso to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962.

[569] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 348.

[570] Russon, "Social Movements…", p. 76.

[571] Interview with Isaiah Dlamini, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

[572] K.P. Vickery, "The Rhodesia Railways African Strike of 1945, Part II: Cause, Consequence, Significance" *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1999), p. 59.

[573] Suret-Canal, "The French West African…", pp. 129-132.

The union further demanded a rapid improvement in the poor and inadequate housing conditions for African employees. Poor accommodation was another result of the policy of cost minimization and profit maximization by capitalist companies. Accommodation for Africans was so inadequate such that by 1962 some Swazi employees were still living at home and commuting to and from work[574] despite the colonial government's stipulation that "African workers were to be accommodated in villages built on the company site."[575] Further, those living in the compounds were still overcrowded. There were about eight workers living in one room.[576] Another former employee of the company testified that during the period in question some Swazi employees lived in the Swazi Nation areas. According to Jacob Seyama, "because the rooms in the compounds were overcrowded I decided to stay at home and commute to work. I was fortunate that home was at Mpuluzi, a few kilometers from the company."[577] Seyama's decision to stay at home was a direct protest to overcrowding in the compounds.

Further, accommodation at Usuthu Pulp was also segregated. While Africans were having inferior and overcrowded accommodation, Europeans had a separate luxury accommodation at Mhlambanyatsi, a few kilometers from the mill. They had bigger houses, mostly with two bedrooms, kitchens and toilets and bathrooms.[578] Thus, the strike was also a challenge by the workers to the company to improve their housing conditions and to make these at par with those of their European counterparts. African workers challenged being treated less than their white counterparts. They now saw themselves first as workers who were at the company to stay, unlike in the earlier period where once dissatisfied with working and living conditions they would just pack and leave, thus they wanted the company improve their housing conditions. Compared to the earlier periods of early individual labour withdrawal, during this period the

[574] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report from a visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson and Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Mdziniso to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962.

[575] Dlamini, "Race Relations…", p. 91.

[576] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 88.
[577] Interview with Jacob Seyama, Luyengo, 3 November 2018.

[578] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report by the Labour Officer and Assistant Labour Officer on their Visit to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962; Interview with Nhlanhla Dzingindzawo, Ndinda, 13 October 2018; Interview with Mrs. Dlamini, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

process of proletarianisation had improved among the workers. The workers had spent a longer time at the company and were beginning to be more dependent on wage labour

The union also demanded an immediate end to racial discrimination at the company. This was informed by the anti-discriminatory legislation of 1962 on Swazi society.[579] Swazi workers and Africans alike, aware of this legislation which protected them from racial discrimination in the country, resisted racial discrimination at the company by going on strike. At the canteen racial discrimination was very evident because there were separate canteens for Europeans and Africans. The facilities for Europeans were superior compared to those of the Africans. The food was also different; it was better for the whites. According to a former employee, "a meal for Africans at the canteen consisted of meat insides and porridge or rice while the European canteen offered all types of meat."[580] Consequently, most African employees subsisted on buns and lemonade.[581] From this perspective, the strike was meant to end racial discrimination related to alimentation.

Lastly, the workers demanded the removal of two foreign foremen (*tindvuna*), namely Nduna Mavimbela and Malepe, from their positions.[582] There is scant evidence on the reasons for the demand of the removal of the two. Presumably, these two foreign *tindvuna* were ill-treating workers and were also loyal servants of the company, something which the workers resented.[583] In most cases the foreign *tindvuna* tended to be unpopular with the workers and this sometimes led to conflicts between the workers and the *tindvuna.*[584] By demanding the removal of these foreign *tindvuna* workers were rejecting the system of imposed worker representation. Usuthu Pulp used the same system of *tindvuna* to control African labour in the compounds. Compound

[579] For more information on this legislation see, Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 346.

[580] Interview with Shile Dlamini, Ndinda, 13 October 2018.

[581] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report by the Labour Officer and Assistant Labour Officer on their Visit to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962.

[582] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report by the Labour Officer and Assistant Labour Officer on their Visit to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962.

[583] See for instance the case of Havelock Mine in: Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…".

[584] See for instance, Crush, "The Construction of Compound Authority…", p. 380.

managers or *tindvuna* were put in charge of about 5 to 6 compounds. Compounds at Usuthu Pulp were not arranged along ethnic lines because there were not many workers from other African countries.[585] Since ill-treatment in the compounds at the hands of managers and foremen was rife,[586] there was sometimes conflict between workers and *tindvuna*. As Hlanze argues, the workers demanded the removal of Mavimbela and Malepe "to secure their own legitimacy."[587]

Despite the fact that the union had committed itself to keeping the government fully informed of all its activities when it was formed it did not inform the Government Labour Department of their intention to withdraw labour en masse. This shows that the workers were determined to fight against their exploitation without undue interference from the government. Clearly, that was a strategy to have the union recognized since the union would not have been if it did not promise to keep the Labour Department fully informed of its activities. Predictably, the union did not keep the government informed of its intention to strike.

The manner in which the strike was conducted reflects that it was well organized. The strike began early in the morning in the African compound with about thirty strikers who eventually increased to about 150. The strikers wanting to ensure that the strike was hundred percent, assembled in the compound and also "intimidated anyone who was working to abandon their work. They uttered threats and were prepared to use violence if threats failed."[588] The union leaders, who organized the strike, went to the pulp mill to mobilize other workers to join the strike.[589] The fact that the union leaders organised the strike and mobilized other workers to join the strike reflects that consciousness among the workers was not at the same level. Those who formed the strikers in the morning were more conscientized than those workers who were later asked by the union leaders to join the strike. This shows the dynamism and complexity of

[585] Interview with Isaiah Dlamini, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

[586] SNA, File, Report by Makhabane Bhembe, Ndabazabantu at Usuthu Forests-CDC, to the Office of the King's Eye, Usuthu Forest, 20 August 1960.

[587] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 90.
[588] TOS, "Nine Guilty of Public Violence: Sequel to Pulp Mill Strike", 1 June 1962.

[589] TOS, "Mr. Marwick on Pulp Mill Strike", 13 April 1962; *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1962*, p. 6.

worker consciousness; worker consciousness is not an overnight experience but a gradual phenomenon that builds over time, hence the differentiation of workers.

The workers met on the eve of the strike and planned to withdraw their labour en masse the following day. Clearly, workers at Bhunya exploited the compound system, which was meant to control them, to discuss their grievances and how to end their exploitation. As an ex-worker testified, "we had a meeting in the compounds on the eve of the strike in which we resolved not to go to work the following day."[590] This concurs with Rob Turrell's argument that the compound system at Kimberley was exploited by the workers to advance their own interests.[591] The planning of the boycott, however, excluded workers who did not stay in the workers' compounds. These are the workers who were later mobilized by the union leaders to join the strike because they might not have been fully aware of the workers' intention to go on strike.

The strike remains a remarkable event in a number of ways. The level of organization and solidarity was extraordinary given that the union was still at its embryonic stage and the divisions within the workforce (ethnic, occupational, long-term and short-term) as well as the lack of trade union experience. The sheer courage of the workers to confront the paragon of colonial capital was unrivaled. Also, the strike demonstrated the ability by the African workers not only to mobilize themselves for strike action but also to compel company management to bow to their demands. The strike was successful for several reasons. Firstly, there was a hundred percent stay-out by the mill's African workers who were joined during the strike by a small section of the forest workers.[592] This unity of purpose enabled the workers to secure some concessions from the company officials. Secondly, the company was forced to reinstate the two dismissed workers. The other unidentified worker was given a managerial position higher than the one he occupied before his dismissal. Francis Mbelu was given a company scholarship to study for two years in the United Kingdom as a chemist.[593] Thirdly, the workers' demand for the removal of two foreign foremen (*tindvuna*) Nduna Mavimbela and Malepe was also successful. After the strike, the company demoted Nduna Mavimbela to engineering stores clerk, while

[590] Interview with Shile Dlamini, Ndinda, 13 October 2018.

[591] Turrell, "Kimberley…", p. 45.

[592] TOS, "Mr. Marwick on Pulp Mill Strike", 13 April 1962.

[593] TOS, "Sequel to the Pulp Mill Strike", 27 April 1962.

Malepe was sent on long leave and never came back.[594] Finally, during the negotiations with union the company to increases wages for African workers and to improve wage progression periods.[595] It is clear that workers at the Usuthu Pulp Company were successful in achieving their demands.

The strike also reflected the dynamism and multifaceted nature of group worker consciousness at the company. The strike demonstrated a high level of worker consciousness among African employees at the company. The workers demanded an improvement in wages because they now saw themselves first as workers. They no longer viewed themselves as migrant labourers who had one foot in the company and another in the community or in South African mines as they did in the formatives years of the company. They wanted improved wages and living and working conditions because they had no intention of leaving the company. Unlike in the formative years when workers would simply completely withdraw their labour, albeit individually, when conditions were not satisfactory, these workers wanted to force change in the company with regards to living and working conditions through strike action. Clearly, workers were becoming more proletarianized since they had stayed longer at the company.

The strike symbolized the role of ethnic and cultural alliances in worker consciousness. The strike demonstrated that black unity went beyond pan-ethnic to mean all Africans. Thus, Africans at the Usuthu Pulp Company went on strike because they wanted the company to reinstate the two dismissed employees who were South African nationals.[596] Helen Bradford similarly demonstrates that black workers in South Africa supported the ICU putting aside their ethnic differences.[597] This form of worker consciousness at Usuthu Pulp differs from that which occurred at Havelock Mine in the February 28, 1939 strike which was organized by Nyasa workers. In that strike "no other ethnic group in joined the strike".[598] While worker

[594] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report from by the Labour Officer and the Assistant Labour Officer on their Visit to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962.

[595] TOS, "Statement by Pulp Management on the Strike", 13 April 1962.

[596] SNA, File 3049W, Labour Report from by the Labour Officer and the Assistant Labour Officer on their Visit to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 15 October 1962.

[597] Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom.*

[598] See for instance, Simelane, "Labour, Beer…", pp. 8-9.

consciousness at Havelock Mine seem to have been ethicized, at Usuthu Pulp worker consciousness went beyond ethnic boundaries.

Above all, the strike marked the beginning of trade unionism not only at the company but also the country as a whole. Prior to the emergence of trade unionism, workers in the country expressed worker consciousness through early forms of labour withdrawal as well as directing complaints to imposed structures at the companies and the office of the Labour Department as well as the representatives of the traditional system. The strike became a precursor to a series of labour protests that took place in the country in early 1963 forcing the colonial government to bring in the Gordon Highlanders from Kenya.[599] The strike by African workers at Usuthu Pulp proved to be a powerful inspiration for other African workers in the other local companies. Particularly in a country, with no tradition of labour militancy, the effect was profound. In the few months immediately after the Usuthu Pulp strike, significant work stoppages occurred at several companies in the country. Indeed, the strike ushered in a period of labour and political ferment, culminating in the colony-wide wildcat strikes of 1963, never witnessed in Swazi history before.

Wildcat strikes and the 1963 labour unrest

Vito Laterza defines a wildcat strike as a form of workers' mobilization which does not normally "go through the formal process of union authorization and takes place outside the legal framework of collective bargaining."[600] He argues that wildcat strikes tend to blow up and can spread unexpectedly without much prior planning by labour unions. According to Laterza, "the dynamics of crowd formation play a primary role in the development and dissolution of these actions."[601] He argues further that all wildcat strikes occur under specific local and national circumstances, and articulate different grievances and demands. What connect them are the workers' shared experiences of living and working conditions. Wildcat strikes usually start off as a challenge to poor working and living conditions and low wages but tend to develop

[599] TOS, "The Gordon Highlanders", 26 July 1963; Gosnell, *Big Bend* pp. 228-31.
[600] V. Laterza, "Waves of Unrest: Wildcat Strikes and Possible Democratic Change in Swaziland" in: K. Hart (Ed.), *Economy for and Against Democracy* (Berghahn: Berghahn Books, 2015), p. 137.

[601] Laterza, "Waves of Unrest…", p. 137.

politically against the state.[602] Similarly, the 1963 strikes in Swaziland began as a workers' struggle against exploitation at the workplace but developed into a wave of national strikes against the colonial state and traditional system. A salient aspect of the strikes was their political content. Political parties seeking the support of the workers capitalized on the poor working and living conditions as well as low wages and lent their support to the workers.

The 1962 April strike at the Usuthu Pulp Company not only demonstrated a new era of consciousness among Swazi workers but also triggered more labour protests in the country in 1963. As Nhlanhla Dlamini puts it, "the strike was a precursor to a series of workers' strikes that would rumble through the country for the first half of 1963".[603] In early 1963 Swaziland witnessed a wave of strikes across the country which developed into unrest with African workers at the country's major industries[604] demanding improved wages, working and living conditions while also launching attack on the colonial order and traditional system. The labour protests were accompanied by urban demonstrations which contributed in reducing the country to disorder.[605] The promise of independence made political parties; particularly the NNLC, to recognize the strength of trade unions as a tool for improving wages and other conditions of work but more for consolidating its power base to challenge the Swazi traditional system in the power struggle for independence. Consequently, NNLC activists such as Prince Dumisa, Macdonald Maseko, Frank Groening and Princess Bethusile mobilised the labour movement and embarked on a series of strikes that left the country shaken.[606]

The unrest began on 28th February 1963 when about 600 workers of the railway contractors building the line between Ngwenya and Goba went on strike for better wages demanding 30 cents per hour from 5 cents. The strike was averted after two days. Another strike broke out at Ubombo Ranches on 10th March 1963 following a compound dispute which resulted in the

[602] Laterza, "Waves of Unrest…", p. 137.

[603] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 362.
[604] These companies include the Usuthu Pulp, Ubombo Ranches, Havelock Asbestos Mine and Mhlume Sugar Mill.

[605] See for instance, Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 361.

[606] Russon "Social Movements …", p. 76; Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 224.

dismissal of 18 striking cane cutters. The other striking cane cutters were reinstated on reduced wages (rates paid to new workers). In a meeting between workers and Prince Dumisa and Frank Groening of the NNLC, a resolution was taken to petition seventeen demands to management. Negotiations with the workers' representatives continued into March until the workers resolved to withdraw their labour en masse. Shortly after the Ubombo Ranches' strike another one broke out at Peak Timbers in Pigg's Peak. About 150 workers went on strike for 8 days demanding improved wages. The strikers only returned to work after management had agreed to enter into negotiations. On 20th May 1963 about 1,400 workers led by Prince Dumisa went on strike at Havelock Asbestos Mine for improved wages and the dismissals of unpopular company officials.[607] On 1st June workers at Usuthu Pulp workers went on strike demanding improvement in wages and working and living conditions.[608] This strike was shortly followed by another one at Ubombo Ranches on 12th June 1963 supporting the call for a general strike. The strike lasted for a week.[609] The situation was so intense that the British colonial administration was forced to bring in the Gordon Highlanders[610] from Kenya[611] and a detachment of 35 police from the Bechuanaland Protectorate to end the unrest[612] after efforts by King Sobhuza II to urge the workers to end the strikes proved futile. The table below shows the major strikes which culminated into the unrest in 1963.

[607] See also Gosnell, *Big Bend*, pp. 224-231.

[608] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

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

[610] The Gordon Highlanders were British soldiers stationed in Kenya. They arrived in Swaziland by air on 13 June 1963 to stop the wave of strikes which were taking place in the country. For further information on the Gordon Highlanders see *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1963* (London: Her Majesty Stationery Office, 1964), p. 4.

[611] TOS, "The Gordon Highlanders", 26 July 1963; Gosnell, *Big Bend*, pp. 228-31.

[612] *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1963*, p. 4.

Table 8: The Places and Dates of the 1963 Strikes

Name of Company/Area	Date/Duration of Strike
African Railway Construction Workers' Strike	28 February 1963
Big Bend, Ubombo Ranches Workers' Strike	10 March 1963 – 20 March 1963
Peak Timbers Company Workers' Strike	29 March 1963 – 7 April 1963
Havelock Asbestos Mine Workers' Strike	20 May 1963 – 17 June 1963
Usuthu Pulp Company Workers' Strike	1 June 1963
Mbabane Urban Workers' Strike	10 June 1963 – 14 June 1963
Big Bend, Ubombo Ranches Workers' Strike	12 June 1963 – 20 June 1963

Source: *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1963*; TOS, "Last Year's Strikes: Mood of Self Assertion", 17 July 1964.

Causes of the unrest

Hardly a year after the April strike at Usuthu Pulp the country was soon rocked by a wave of strikes which led to labour unrest in 1963. The strikes owed much to old grievances which have been a thorn in the workers' flesh for a very long time dating back to the period between 1955 and 1962. These grievances persisted until 1963 much to the disgruntlement of the workers. These were some unresolved grievances which the imposed workers' council system had failed to address to the satisfaction of the workers. Low wages, poor housing and sanitary conditions, arbitrary dismissals, lack of apprenticeship opportunities and the dearth of promotion opportunities, bad food, racial discrimination and unpaid overtime had caused so much dissatisfaction among the workers which the workers wanted to end.[613] To demonstrate to the companies that they were able to collectively mobilize themselves to have their grievances resolved the workers withdrew their labour en masse making the country ungovernable causing unrest.

[613] See for instance, SNA, File 3049W, Complaints Raised by Labourers at Bhunya to the Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Md[z]iniso, 8 February 1963; TOS, "More Political Strikes Feared by Moses", 4 October 1963; Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 363; Swaziland Government, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Unrest in Swaziland, 25th June – 8th July 1963, p.3.

Wages, low level jobs and job colour bars

Low wages were at the root cause of the unrest in the country and continued to be at the root of worker consciousness among African workers. By 1963 African workers were still paid low wages. Thus, wages for African workers still lagged far behind those offered to their European counterparts. Africans in the major companies in the early 1960s earned from £3 to £25 compared to Europeans who earned up to £62 monthly.[614] Workers in the local companies were unhappy with the low wages they received from their employers and demanded improved wages. At Usuthu Pulp, for instance, the union demanded a living wage for all the employees and proposed that their salaries should be increased to R41.60 monthly.[615] The union also demanded the company to declare its policy to all employees regarding wage increments and other benefits with a view to ending the uncertainties and confusion which existed on the minds of the workers in this regard.[616] This was caused by the fact that European workers at the company were paid many benefits which African workers did not receive. Thus, the workers demanded clarity with regards to wage increments and other benefits. The workers were aware that Europeans received bonuses from the company, while there were none for them. Consequently, they wanted the company to have an open-door policy and clear the confusion they had regarding bonuses. They wanted to know what criteria the company used in giving bonuses to Europeans only, instead of giving it to all the workers. At Ubombo Ranches wages were also at the centre of the strike since workers demanded a wage increment of R30.00 per month from R7.00.[617] At Peak Timbers workers also went on strike demanding £1 a day.[618] Despite that management at Havelock Mine claimed that wages for African workers were adequate since 90% of the workers were able to open savings accounts at Barclays Bank low wages were at the root of the workers' strike at the mine.[619] The workers demanded a minimum wage of R30.00 a month.[620] As Kenneth P.

[614] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 157.

[615] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[616] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[617] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 363.

[618] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 370.

[619] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to the Havelock Asbestos Mine, 31st January 1963

Vickery argues the Rhodesia Railways African Strike of 1945 was also caused by low wages paid to these African workers.[621] Local companies like most capitalist companies in the Southern African region, paid low wages to Africans as a way through which these companies minimized costs and maximized profits. As Phimister argues the profitability of capitalist companies hinged heavily on large supplies of cheap labour.[622] In spite of the capitalist companies' policies of cost minimization and profit maximization workers shaped their own destinies and challenged the low wages that they received at the hands of these companies. Africans were aware that the strength of collective bargaining lay in withdrawing their labour en masse. The workers valued their labour, so they wanted to be paid wages that were commensurate to their labour. To force the companies to increase their wages workers as a collective unit went on strike.

Leaders of political parties, particularly the NNLC, took advantage of the situation and led the workers during the strikes inciting them to demand a minimum wage of £1 a day which was an NNLC general demand for all workers.[623] During the strikes African workers sung a protest song "*sifuna mpondo ngelilanga. Ayibuye siyayifuna*" meaning; "we demand £1 a day! Let it come, we demand it"[624] with reference to wage increments. As Penvenne argues during the colonial period Mozambican workers also demonstrated their consciousness through songs which expressed their dissatisfaction.[625] Prince Dumisa of the NNLC moved around the local companies and influenced the workers to demand from the companies a £1 per day salary, which workers eventually got even though not immediately after the strike.[626] Whereas the workers did

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[620] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 370.

[621] K.P. Vickery, "The Rhodesia…", pp. 49-71.

[622] See for instance, I. Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle* (London, 1988), p. 23.

[623] See for instance, Russon, "Social Movements, pp. 76-79.

[624] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 103.

[625] Penvenne, *African Workers,* p. 45.

[626] Hlanze, "The Evolution of Worker Consciousness…", p. 103.; Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 370.

not immediately get a wage increment, it became clear to the companies that they could not continue to pay African workers low wages.

Most African workers, then, occupied low-level jobs and as a result were paid low wages. The workers were unhappy with the dearth of promotion opportunities for African employees at the local companies. In February 1963 Usuthu Pulp employees raised complaints to the assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Mdziniso during his visit to the company. Among other things the workers complained that Africans never became operators yet when the mill started trainers from Sweden trained them to become operators. Instead, the company placed these Africans in the position of foremen (*tindvuna*) which was a position that was junior than that of operator. However, when new Europeans were employed at the company they were made operators even though they were not trained. The company even assigned the African foremen to train the new Europeans how to operate the machines.[627] These workers wanted to be promoted to become operators because they were aware that they deserved to be operators since, like the Europeans, they were equally trained. Usuthu Pulp, like most capitalist companies not only stood squarely within the 'cheap labour' tradition but also represented the tradition of a racially segmented workforce whereby job colour bars reserved the higher occupations for whites. Through their demands for equal promotion opportunities African workers were attacking the job colour bars.

Further, Africans were unhappy with the low level positions that they occupied and wanted to compete with their European counterparts. At Usuthu Pulp, for instance, workers demanded the company to take immediate steps to bring into force an effective apprenticeship training scheme to which all employees of the company were eligible.[628] Africans wanted to occupy senior positions at the company just like their European counterparts. Consequently, the workers demanded the company to provide a training scheme which would end its segregated promotion policy and come up with a new policy that would provide equal opportunities to all its employees including blacks. Africans challenged the company to stop its segregated promotion policy in

[627] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.
[628] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

which only whites benefited and provide a non-segregated policy that would allow even blacks to get promotions.

Bad and inadequate food for Swazi workers

Local companies distributed both raw food and cooked meals as rations to African employees. Married personnel received dry rations while single personnel received cooked meals.[629] Food rations were either distributed on a daily or weekly scale depending on the type of food and company policy. Cooked meals were divided into day and night shifts. Day shifts comprised three meals; breakfast, lunch and supper while night shifts had two meals, afternoon and morning.[630] Breakfast meals consisted of *indengane* or *emahewu* while the main meals, lunch and supper, consisted of soup and porridge. In some companies wives of employees were authorized to draw dry rations on behalf of their husbands.[631]

The unrest was also caused by the fact that African workers were unhappy with the food that was given to them by the local companies. The synopsis of food rations that were given to African workers in the local companies in the 1960s in Chapter 5 revealed that the rations issued to the African workers were low in items such as meat and other sources of proteins and protective foods. African workers also complained that on some occasions bad food was served in the African canteens, yet there was no reduction in the price when such happened.[632] A former Usuthu Pulp worker testified that "bad food was served to blacks while whites were served with better food. We were sold porridge and meat insides whereas whites ate better meat, not insides. Even if you had money to buy better food in the European canteen, you were not allowed to do so."[633] This demonstrates that the workers were unhappy that they were served bad food in the

[629] See for instance, SNA, File 3049W, Note by Labour Officer on his Visit to the Mhlume Sugar Company, 12th November 1963.

[630] See for instance, SNA, File 3049W, Note by Labour Officer on his Visit to Mill site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April 1963.

[631] See for instance, SNA, File 3049W, Note by Labour Officer on his Visit to Mill site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April 1963

[632] Interview with Mavubulane Manyatsi, Ndinda, 13 October 2018; SNA, File 3049W, Complaints Raised by Labourers at Bhunya to the Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Md[z]iniso, 8 February 1963.

[633] Interview with Mavubulane Manyatsi, Ndinda, 13 October 2018.

African canteen. Consequently, they challenged the company to improve the taste of the food and reduce its price when it tasted badly. Africans did not want to waste their money on bad food. In addition, workers responded by boycotting the food at the canteen and instead bought their own food.[634] Further, the workers demanded the Usuthu Pulp Company to stop providing African employees with food rations and instead pay wages on a weekly basis so that workers would be able to buy food on their own account.[635] This demonstrates that the workers did not favour the food provided by the company and opted to buy their own food instead. The workers were successful because the company eventually stopped providing them with food rations and gave the workers money to purchase their own food even though it is not clear how much they got.[636] This demonstrates that the workers were able to secure some concessions since they forced the company to bow to their demands. This was because of the bargaining strength of group solidarity which brought fear on the company that workers could withdraw their labour en masse if their demands were not met.

Food was not only bad among local companies but also inadequate for African employees. Although in theory the companies fed their workforce through food rations, in fact virtually every worker and unquestionably every worker purchased additional food regularly. Food was doubtless the largest recurrent item of most workers' cash budgets, larger than more durable items. Oral evidence reveal workers buying one extra bag of the staple, maize meal, per month. Other frequent purchases include meat, sugar, tea and tinned milk.[637] African workers bought additional food because they found company rations deficient in both quantity and quality. Resident wives in some companies were issued a smaller amount of rations, although at some companies they received nothing.[638] The greatest pressure was on families since a week's rations

[634] SNA, File 3049W, Visit by the Labour Officer and Assistant Labour Officer to the Usuthu Pulp Company, August 1963.

[635] SNA, File 3049W, Visit by the Labour Officer and Assistant Labour Officer to the Usuthu Pulp Company, August 1963.

[636] Jacob Seyama, Luyengo, 3 November 2018.

[637] Interview with Zebra Dlamini, Pigg's Peak, 8 October 2018; Interview with Mavubulane Manyatsi, Ndinda, 13 October 2018; Jacob Seyama, Luyengo, 3 November 2018.

[638] At Mhlume Sugar Company for instance, wives of workers were not given food rations while at Havelock Mine wives of workers received food rations.

usually lasted families no more than two days. Meat, given out once a week, usually lasted one day. In the case of the Havelock Asbestos Mine for instance, the food rations supplied to African workers were inadequate.[639] Workers were only given tins of *indengane* with bread and coffee for their mid-shift meal. Mine management was even planning to introduce a 'vitaminized' drink for underground miners since it was discovered that workers needed to boost their energy levels.[640] This suggests that even management was aware that the food rations served to underground miners was deficient in quantity for the demanding job that they were doing. In response to the shortage of food rations supplied to them African workers at Havelock Asbestos Mine withdrew their labour en masse.

Racial discrimination and ill-treatment of Swazi workers

Through the strikes, African workers were also protesting against racial discriminatory policies and practices that they were exposed to at the workplace. Firstly, African workers protested strongly against the constant slurs on them by the Labour Officer through his repeated reference to Africans as foreigners. The workers considered this as a calculated plan by the Labour Officer to implement the policy of 'divide and rule' which created division between one African and another. The workers found this policy provoking and demanded an immediate end to it.[641] Clearly, worker consciousness among African workers had reached a new level whereby the unity of labour went beyond pan-ethnicism to mean all Africans. The workers were aware that the Labour Officer was trying to divide them by referring to workers from other African states as foreigners. African workers in the country during this period viewed themselves as a collective unity which had common interests. As Jeff Crisp argues, "workers were, therefore, beginning to identify themselves as an occupational community with common interests and enemies [and] were beginning to express their collective identity in the language of class and conflict".[642] In the country this was the case because workers rejected the Labour Officer's strategy of

[639] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p.371.

[640] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to the Havelock Asbestos Mine, 31st January 1963.

[641] See for instance, SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[642] J. Crisp, *The Story of an African Working Class: Ghanaian Miner's Struggles, 1870-1980* (London: Zed Press, 1984), p. 65, cited in: Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 347.

weakening them by trying to divide between one African and another. Secondly, workers demanded an immediate end of the practice of separating Europeans and Africans in the canteen facilities and services, and the provision of different counters and service in the stores. For instance, "Africans buying goods such as bread were always supplied unwrapped whereas such crude treatment was never accorded to European customers."[643] Thirdly, the workers demanded that local companies to immediately end their policy of reserving a certain category of jobs on the basis of race and colour as this was in violation of the letter and spirit of undertaking given by the companies when the concessions for their operation in the country were granted."[644] This demonstrates that workers were aware that racial discrimination against them was in violation of the agreements that the companies made when they were given rights to operate in Swaziland. When the companies started reserving supervisory jobs for whites workers were quick to remind them of their agreement. For instance, at Havelock Asbestos Mine racial discrimination was one of the main workers' grievances during the unrest. Workers in the mine demanded that "all discriminatory practices in shops, public bars, etc., should come to an end immediately and without delay from now on."[645] To force the mine to end the discriminatory practices at their respective workplaces workers resolved to withdraw their labour en masse. Further, African workers also engaged in a wave of strikes in 1963 because they were challenging ill-treatment at the hands of company bosses. For instance, Africans were unjustifiably beaten up violently by white supervisors especially underground at Havelock Asbestos Mine.[646]

Housing and sanitary conditions for Swazi workers

Through the strikes African workers were challenging inadequate housing and poor sanitary conditions that they were exposed to at the local companies. For instance, accommodation was both inadequate and poor for African workers at Peak Timbers Limited since they were overcrowded in the compounds. The compounds had 4 blocks each with 4 rooms with, on

[643] Interview with, Aaron Dzingindzawo, Ndinda, 13 October 2018; see also SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[644] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

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

[646] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 371.

average, 5 persons per room. The conditions of the blocks were also bad. In one of the blocks, for instance, the windows were obscured by a wood and iron lean-to shack against the wall. The compound was very dirty, crowded and fly ridden. The workers slept on wooden double bunks.[647] Poor and inadequate housing was also a thorny issue for workers at Ubombo Ranches in 1963. The housing conditions at the company were poor. The finish on the houses was poor and holes were crumbling in walls and floors. The facilities were inadequate for the compound population did not meet the Government prescription of 1 shower per 15 workers. However, the company only provided 2 shower blocks each for males and for females which was far below the prescribed standards.[648] The company also acknowledged the poor conditions of the workers' houses such that during negotiations with the Workers' Committee the company promised its workers that it will build new villages with adequate housing and facilities once the company had improved financially. The company further promised the workers a supply of purified water to the workers.[649] This demonstrates that accommodation at Ubombo Ranches was both poor and inadequate. Further, it demonstrates that workers responded to poor and inadequate housing through mass labour withdrawal. Such housing conditions demonstrate a complete lack of concern for the primary requirements of African workers on the part of the management of these companies. In response to the problem of inadequate and poor accommodation some African workers built several shacks within the compounds using their own materials. These huts were found to be considerably cleaner than the rest of the compound.[650] This supports Vickery's argument that Rhodesian railway workers who did not get company accommodation were told to build themselves something quickly, and often they were given no materials. Sometimes it compelled the workers to sneak onto white farms at night to steal poles for their houses. When leaving employment, they would take the doors with them, to salvage something from the investment of their own unpaid time and energy.[651] Whereas Rhodesian railway men were

[647] SNA, File 3049W, Report on a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to the Mill site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April, 1963.

[648] SNA, File 3049W, Note by Labour Officer on his Visit to the Ubombo Ranches Ltd, 30th October 1963.

[649] See, Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p.363.

[650] SNA, File 3049W, Report on a Visit by the Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, to the Mill site Compound of Peak Timbers Ltd, 25th April, 1963. See also SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June 1961.

allowed to take their materials when they left the employment centres Swazi workers at Ubombo Ranches were forced to surrender their houses to the company and were not allowed to take with them their own materials nor give it to their friends at the end of their contracts or upon dismissals.[652]

Although accommodation was relatively better at Havelock Mine compared to the other companies, housing conditions were still not good at Havelock Asbestos Mine since African workers were overcrowded and congested in the compounds. As Nhlanhla Dlamini argues the few houses that were built for married men in the 1950s did not make much of a difference since married workers continued to live in the singles' quarters.[653] The visiting Labour Officer, J.B. Wilson, also acknowledged this shortage of accommodation for its African employees at the mine. Wilson observed that the mine failed to accommodate all its married workers since only 37% of the workers were accommodated in married quarters yet the desired aim was to accommodate more than 50% of the targeted workers.[654] This demonstrates that accommodation for married African workers at Havelock Mine was inadequate.

Through the strikes African workers were also challenging the discriminatory housing policies towards them by local companies. By 1963, accommodation was still separate for white and black workers at the local companies. Europeans continued to live in luxury homes while blacks continued to live in inferior houses. Describing European housing a former domestic worker stated that "whites' houses were mostly two-bedroom houses with proper and adequate toilet and bath facilities, with hot running water and electricity."[655] African housing was the complete opposite to European housing. At Bhunya African workers were overcrowded in the compounds

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[651] K.P. Vickery, "The Rhodesia Railways African Strike of 1945…", p. 61.

[652] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June 1961.

[653] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 371.

[654] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to the Havelock Asbestos Mine, 31st January 1963.

[655] Interview with Mrs. Dlamini, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

and not provided with hot running water in all the houses. Some houses did not even have electric lighting, and there was no provision of proper and adequate toilet and bath facilities."[656]

The strikes were also a protest against the policy of segregated housing prevalent in the local companies. African workers responded by demanding the companies to put an immediate end to this policy.[657] The workers believed that this was a racial issue. Although racial discrimination had been abolished in Swaziland in 1962 it continued to exist beyond this period. As Nhlanhla Dlamini argues, "despite the abolition of racial discrimination in Swaziland different forms of discrimination also persisted in private companies. [There was a] tendency to provide better facilities for Whites. The situation does not appear to have been any different… [at the] Usuthu Pulp Company."[658] Housing was also segregated at Peak Timbers with African workers allocated inferior accommodation compared to their European counterparts.[659] Residential areas were also segregated at Havelock Asbestos since it was prohibited for blacks to mix with whites.[660] Similarly, residential areas were also segregated at Usuthu Pulp since Europeans lived at Mhlambanyatsi which was a few kilometres from the mill while Africans lived at Bhunya, next to the mill. The workers challenged racial discrimination at the company through collective withdrawal of labour.

Ancillary benefits and overtime for Swazi workers

As Kenneth Vickery argues "the African railway men's demands for compensation when sick or injured, for paid leave, and for benefits when leaving the service, can all be seen as their response to the Railways treating them rather like a sponge, to be squeezed tightly while actually

[656] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[657] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[658] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", pp. 425-426.

[659] C. Nhleko, "Labour Relations at Peak Timbers, 1949-1990", BA Project, University of Swaziland in: Dlamini, "The Legal Abolotion…", p.359.

[660] See, Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p.363.

productive, but hung out to dry when not."[661] Like their railway counterparts African workers in Swaziland challenged local companies' tendencies to treat them like sponges and demanded ancillary benefits and unpaid overtime. As we have already seen that conditions, particularly residential conditions, were hardly conducive to physical health, wages for Africans were very low, the food was neither nutritional nor adequate while the tasks were very demanding and dangerous in the local companies. The workers responded by demanding the establishment of an effective provident fund scheme that would allow them to have a gratuity at the termination of their services with the company.[662] Although local companies provided pension schemes for European employees most local companies did not have pension schemes for African employees. At Mhlume Sugar Company and Ubombo Ranches, for instance, there were no pension schemes for African workers by 1960 yet there were pension schemes for European workers.[663] At Havelock Asbestos Mine for instance there was pension for an African worker which was based on the term of service for retiring workers. Employees retiring at the age 62 years after 20 years of service were entitled to a gratuity of R10.00 per year of service plus a pension of R5.00 per month. Employees retiring at the age 62 years after 10 years of service were entitled to a gratuity of R5.00 per year of service plus a pension of R5.00 per month. Employees retiring before the age 62 years after 10 years of service, under the discretion of the Manager, were entitled to a gratuity of R2.00 per year of service without pension.[664] Although in theory the Havelock Mine provided a pension scheme for Africans in practice it was virtually impossible for African workers to benefit from the pension scheme. There were certain difficult conditions that were set by the mine for workers to qualify for the pension. For instance, the worker had to be at 62 years of age and to have worked for the mine for over 20 years. It was very difficult for a mine labourer who was underfed, poorly housed and lacked enough rest without annual leave to do a demanding job underground until the age of 62 years. Also, with arbitrary dismissals common among local companies it was nearly impossible for an African worker to spend 20 years of

[661] Vickery, "The Rhodesia Railways African Strike of 1945…", p. 61.

[662] Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", pp. 425-426.

[663] See SNA File 3049/50, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to Mhlume Sugar Company, 5th February 1960; SNA File 3049/50, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to Ubombo Ranches Limited, 12th July 1960.

[664] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to the Havelock Asbestos Mine, 28th October 1963 and 7th November 1963.

service in one company. Workers below 62 years had to be certified by the Mine Medical Officer and African Village Manager as being no longer fit to continue in their present occupation, a position which was to be confirmed by the Mine Manager. If there was ever any doubt about the African who applied for a pension the mine sought the opinion of the Native Commissioner. In the case of an African died while working for the mine but had been employed at the mine for more than 10 years their dependents received a gratuity of £1 for every completed year of their service. This condition did not apply, however, in cases when the worker's death enabled their dependents to get compensation from Workmen's Compensation Acts or other legal enactments.[665] Most importantly, the final decision to give pension to African workers lay with Mine Management. For instance, the mine stated that "African pensions and gratuities are ex gratis in nature and confer no legal rights on the employees, and maybe modified or withdrawn by the Company."[666] Further, the company made it clear that African pensions and gratuities were subject in all cases to the authority of the Mine Manager.[667] These suggest that even all the requirements were met the African worker or their dependents did not automatically qualify to benefit from the pension scheme, the Mine Manager still had the final say. In essence, African European workers were not provided with pension schemes while their African counterparts were not. In response African workers demanded the establishment of an effective provident fund scheme that would allow them to have a gratuity at the termination of their services with the employer. The workers sought some sort of financial reward or security at the end of their service. They were also aware that they worked under difficult and hazardous conditions. It need hardly be stated that there were high chances of injury since there were plenty of heavy, hard objects around mill and underground operations, many of them moving. Breaking or even losing limbs (especially fingers) was common. With the meagre wages they received at the companies they were not able to save for the future. Also, with unfair dismissals common workers wanted to ensure that they get terminal benefits after being fired from work.

[665] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to the Havelock Asbestos Mine, accompanied by the District Officer, Pigg's Peak, 24th October 1957.

[666] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to the Havelock Asbestos Mine, accompanied by the District Officer, Pigg's Peak, 24th October 1957.

[667] SNA, File 3049W, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to the Havelock Asbestos Mine, accompanied by the District Officer, Pigg's Peak, 24th October 1957.

They knew that their work was risky and their contracts could be terminated anytime by injury or ill-health without something to fall back on in terms of gratuity. To avoid such from happening, they demanded the companies to establish a scheme that would allow them to save money for a time when their time to leave the companies came.[668] This supports Jock MacCullock's argument that ex-miners at Havelock Asbestos Mine suffered after the mines closure because they had no terminal benefits resulting from the mine's policy regarding terminal benefits.[669]

African workers in most local companies received no paid leave, unlike their European counterparts who were entitled to paid annual leave depending on company policy.[670] African workers demanded that all employees be entitled to annual leave on full pay. At Usuthu Pulp workers demanded that employees who had completed a year of service to the company and had not completed 5 years were to take 14 days as leave, while those who had completed 5 years and more were to take 21 days. In addition, the workers demanded that the company should arrange for workers to take their annual leave at the time each leave period became due.[671] This suggests that Africans did not receive paid leave when it was due unlike their European counterparts who received their paid leave. This prompted the union at Usuthu Pulp to demand the company to declare its policy to all employees regarding other benefits with a view to ending the uncertainties and confusion which existed on the minds of the workers in this regard.[672] The workers were aware that their European counterparts received paid leave annually while there was none for them. Africans were not entitled to paid annual leave; they were only entitled to 3 public holidays. Europeans on the other hand were entitled to two weeks paid leave per annum.

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[668] See for instance, SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[669] J. MacCullock, "Dust, Disease and Labour at Havelock Asbestos Mine, Swaziland", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 31, 2 (2006), pp. 251-266.

[670] At Mhlume Europeans were entitled to two weeks paid leave per annum while Africans were not entitled to paid annual leave.

[671] See for instance, SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[672] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

Paid sick leave was only given in cases of injury on duty.[673] Similarly, Vickery argues that African Railway men did not receive paid leave, unlike their European counterparts who were entitled to sixteen paid days per year. The latter often used the time and free rail passes for their families to go on resort holidays.[674] Africans usually sought leave for the purpose of visiting rural homes. In particular, Swazi workers who were within reasonable reach of rural homes expressed a desire to go there for particular purposes. For instance, "everybody would want leave at the time of ploughing", said David Dlamini of Bhunya.[675] Otherwise, African workers sought, understandably enough, rest and recuperation. Whereas during the period between 1950 and 1954, workers at Usuthu Pulp challenged the company policy of not warranting leave to its workers by withdrawing their labour individually in the 1960s, workers united behind the union and demanded leave with pay from the company. This demonstrates that workers were aware that they were entitled to annual leave on full pay, thus they demanded company to allow them to take their leave with full pay. The most important thing was that workers pushed their grievances together as a group, a strategy which put them in advantage over the company because of the threat of their ability to withdraw labour en masse.

In all local companies African workers could obtain free medical care from company clinics[676] and even hospitalization if necessary. However, company managers and doctors typically suspected malingering, and this was part of the argument against sick pay by most employers. They claimed that it led to the rise of absenteeism at the work place although European workers were granted it. The reality for Africans, complained labourers from Ubombo Ranches, was that "we have a doctor here, the doctor, if a person is sick, says he is not sick, in some cases, in other cases he chases him away from work because he is sick."[677] It was common for employers to

[673] SNA File 3049/50, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to Mhlume Sugar Company, 5th February 1960.

[674] Vickery, "The Rhodesia Railways African Strike of 1945…", p. 61.

[675] Interview with David Dlamini, Bhunya, 6 October 2018.

[676] At Ubombo Ranches for instance there was a resident Medical Officer, Dr. H.A. Jones, and a trained African nurse who were both employed by the company. See also SNA File 3049/50, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to Ubombo Ranches Limited, 12th July 1960; SNA File 3049/50, Report by the Labour Officer on his Visit to Mhlume Sugar Company, 5th February 1960.

[677] SNA File 3402/4, Letter from Ubombo Ranches Limited Swazi Workers to the Governor, 4th June 1961.

deny medical care for African employees when they fell ill on grounds that they were pretending to be sick. Sick African workers were denied medical care but also they also risked losing not only their pay but their jobs too.

The workers further demanded the employers to install and provide protective devices at all points of operation throughout the plants and sites where employees were exposed to dangerous fumes and dust because constant inhalation of these was dangerous to the health and well-being of the workers. Furthermore, the workers demanded that the companies provide free of cost protective clothing such as overalls, gloves, rubber boots and goggles to employees engaged in operations warranting these to reduce the hazards to personal injury and ill-health.[678] This is indicative of the fact that the workers were concerned with their safety. They were aware that their work exposed them to difficult and dangerous conditions, so they demanded the company to protect them by providing free of cost protective clothing. Jock MucCullock made a similar point for employees of Havelock Mine by arguing that ex-employees of the mine continued to experience ill-health even after the mine's closure due to the fact that they worked under hazardous conditions.[679]

African workers also had to deal with unpaid overtime. At Usuthu Pulp, for instance, workers were unhappy that, although they sometimes did overtime work the company did not pay them their overtime salaries. The management of the company justified this by explaining that there only reason was that the payment was not initialed by someone who was in charge of a plant. The company claimed the overtime was eventually paid after the card had been initialed.[680] A former employee of the company also confirmed this when he testified that "we were angry that the company did not pay us for overtime work even though we worked on weekends. This was our money which we had worked hard for."[681] The workers were aware that they deserved their

[678] See for instance, SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June, 1963.

[679] MacCullock, "Dust, Disease and Labour…", pp. 251-266.

[680] SNA, File 3049W, Complaints Raised by Labourers at Bhunya to the Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Md[z]iniso, 8 February 1963.

[681] Interview with Macondza Vilakati, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

overtime salaries and as a result they challenged the company over their unpaid overtime. Working overtime was one way through which Africans at the company complemented their meagre salaries to meet their ever increasing expenses. When the workers were not paid their overtime salaries they challenged the company by withdrawing their labour en masse. It is important to note that workers, during this period, saw themselves more as a group with common interests and grievances. They were aware that if they united behind the union there was a great chance of securing concessions from management. Workers also demanded that overtime be paid more than normal weekdays and double on Sundays and public holidays.[682] The workers knew that overtime work was supposed to be paid more than the normal rate during weekdays and double on Sundays and public holidays. They wanted the company to pay them according to these rates instead of underpaying them. During this period the weapon that workers had was that they could withdraw labour en masse in order to force the company to address their grievances. All the grievances during this period were articulated in that spirit and awareness. Failure by the company to address these grievances consequently resulted to a strike.

Arbitrary dismissals of Swazi workers

The unrest was a direct challenge to arbitrary dismissals that were prevalent in local companies. The labour union complained to the Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Mdziniso during his visit at Usuthu Pulp that the company was unjustifiably dismissing Swazi workers who were qualified machine operators. Despite that these workers were qualified operators the company did not employ them as operators. Instead, the company placed them in the position of foremen (*tindvuna*) which was a position that was junior than that of operator. The company further infuriated the workers by employing new Europeans as operators even though they were not trained. The workers resented that the company even assigned them to train these Europeans how to operate the machines.[683] The workers strongly believed that the reason for their arbitrary dismissals was that management was conscious of the fact that they had not been treated fairly and thought that the best way to deal with them was to fire them.[684] The workers were aware

[682] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.
[683] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[684] SNA, File 3049W, Complaints Raised by Labourers at Bhunya to the Assistant Labour Officer, M.B. Md[z]iniso,

that they were being unfairly dismissed, thus they wanted the company to reverse arbitrary dismissals. Whereas during the period between 1955 and 1961 workers challenged unfair dismissals by individually appealing to the imposed worker representatives, in 1963 workers challenged unfair dismissals through collective bargaining. They were aware of their strength to bargain collectively, thus they demanded the company to end arbitrary dismissals.

The workers also expressed frustration over the victimization and unjustified dismissals they suffered at the company. The company had a tendency to victimize and unjustifiably fire them for their involvement in trade union activities. Consequently, the trade union demanded an immediate end to the practice of victimizing and unjustifiably dismissing African employees because of their trade union activities. A former worker of the company testified that, "workers were fired by the company because they played a huge role in forming a trade union at the company."[685] The union demanded, "in this regard, the union calls upon the company to receive a delegation of the union executive to discuss these cases without further delay."[686] The demand by the union for an urgent meeting with officials of the company to discuss the victimization of workers by arbitrary dismissals shows that the workers wanted the issue to be resolved immediately. Further, it demonstrates that workers' grievances were now negotiated by the union on behalf of the workers instead of worker representatives as it happened in the preceding chapter.

African workers in Swaziland were also denied freedom of assembly, association and speech. At Usuthu Pulp, for instance, workers, through the union, expressed unhappiness with the fact that they were denied freedom of assembly, association and speech despite that it was guaranteed under the laws of the country. The workers responded by demanding the company desist from its policy of denying workers freedom of assembly, association and speech as these were their legitimate right. It reminded the company that the laws of Swaziland guaranteed every citizen these fundamental human rights. With regard to this the union demanded the company to

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8 February 1963.

[685] Interview with David Dlamini, Bhunya, 6 October 2018.

[686] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

remove all barriers against workers holding their legitimate trade union meetings on grounds that such was not permitted on the company's property without expressed permission.[687] This demonstrates one example of how employers in Swaziland frustrated trade union activities despite that trade unions were eligible in the country. By 1963 the company had still not recognized the trade union in spite of the fact that it was formed and registered in 1962. This is clearly indicated in the company's refusal to allow trade union members to hold meetings on its premises. Clearly, the company felt threatened by the ability of the workers to organize themselves and challenge any form of exploitation by the company.

The workers' demands at Usuthu Pulp went beyond wages, working and living conditions to address wider national issues such as unemployment. The union, while advocating for employment opportunities for all nationalities, demanded the company to give due regard to the serious state of unemployment in the country by giving first preference to Swazi applicants for vacancies.[688] This demand was nationalistic because the union was not only concerned with the welfare of the workers at the company; it was also concerned with the unemployment situation in the country. This conforms to Robert Rotberg's argument that African labour protests were synonymous to African nationalism.[689] Similarly, workers at Usuthu Pulp demonstrated nationalism by demanding that Swazi citizens be given first preference with regards to employment.

The significance of the unrest

The 1963 labour unrest remains a remarkable event in a number of ways. To begin with, the sheer courage of exploited workers confronting the paragon of colonial capital was remarkable. The level of solidarity and organization was extraordinary, given the geographical range of the local industries, the divisions in the workforce along ethnic and occupational lines and the lack of trade union experience. This supports the argument by Robin Cohen, Jean Copans and Peter

[687] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[688] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[689] Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism*, pp. 161-172.

C.W. Gutkind that, when strike action occurs, "it is revealed that workers not only perceive the extent of injustices, but they also have the courage and skill to organise themselves, and reject the authority of their leaders."[690] And this was a pan-African event, transcending colonialism's arbitrary limits. Above all, though, the timing was spot on. The strikes erupted in the early 1960s, a period of widespread African nationalism which sought to end colonialism in the continent. Thus, the unrest was part of a continent-wide and even world-wide series of convulsions involving, especially, colonial labouring people.

The unrest, although rooted, above all, in the working and living conditions of the African workers and their effects on their families, was a direct challenge to colonialism. Since the strikes, like other strikes elsewhere, would be pointed to, and sometimes seized upon, by other classes with other agendas. To use Vickery's words "the awakened, widening anti-colonial impulse would quicken, and the colonial day was moved to its afternoon."[691] The labour unrest symbolized the rejection of the colonial order. The strikers, like the post-war nationalists, had aspirations for political emancipation. Such a view seemed not only possible but also imminent to the workers.

A salient aspect of the unrest was its political content. Political parties seeking the support of the workers capitalized on the poor working and living conditions as well as low wages and lent their support to the workers. For instance, the NNLC acknowledged the strength of trade unions as a tool for improving wages and other conditions of work and sought to use the labour movement in consolidating its power base to challenge the Swazi traditional system in the upcoming independence elections. Consequently, NNLC activists such as Prince Dumisa, Macdonald Maseko, Frank Groening and Princess Bethusile mobilized the labour movement and embarked on a wave of strikes that left the country shaken.[692] Prince Dumisa, in particular, moved around the local companies to incite the workers to demand a living wage of R2.00 per

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[690] Cohen, Copans and Gutkind (eds.), *African Labour*, p. 17.

[691] Vickery, "The Rhodesia Railways African Strike of 1945…", p. 70.

[692] Russon "Social Movements …", p. 76; Interview with Caleb Nkonyane, Bhunya, 6 October 2018; Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 224.

day.[693] This is indicative of the fact that party leaders used low wages and poor working and living conditions as an opportunity to push their political agenda. In supporting the workers, political parties believed that workers would realize their importance and reciprocate by advancing the parties' cause. This led to the British colonial administration and Swazi traditional rulers concluding that the unrest was politically inclined.[694] As Gerald Kunene argues that "the situation was accentuated by the emergence of political parties and nationalist figures who combined workers' grievances with political demands thus adding a new dimension to Swaziland's industrial scenario".[695] Similarly, Robert Rotberg argues that African labour protests were synonymous to African nationalism.[696] Peter Alexander makes a similar observation when he argues that strikes in South Africa after 1948 were a challenge to apartheid.[697] African labour protests have also demonstrated that the role of a trade union sometimes goes beyond working and living conditions to wider national political issues. Some workers also had aspirations about the political dispensation of their country. In the case of the ICU, for example, the union became a political forum for Africans. Similarly, Frederick Cooper argues that labour protests in colonial West Africa were influenced by decolonization politics.[698] Peter Alexander also argues that there was a relationship between labour and politics in the South African strikes during the Second World War.[699]

The alliance between labour unions and political parties brought fear to the traditional system, in particular, with the up-coming pre-independence elections in 1964. When it became clear that Swaziland would be eventually granted her independence the traditional system and political

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[693] Interview with Jacob Seyama, Luyengo, 3 November 2018.

[694] TOS, "More Political Strikes Feared by Moses", 4 October 1963.

[695] Kunene, "British Colonial Policy…", pp. 403-404.

[696] Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism*, pp. 161-172.

[697] Alexander, *Workers, War and the Origins*, p. 8.

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

[699] P. Alexander, *Workers, War and the Origins of Apartheid…*, p. 4; see also L. van der Walt, a review of P. Alexander, *Workers, War*, pp. 168-169.

parties competed over who should take over power and lead the country to independence. The support of the workforce was critical in the up-coming pre-independence elections. Despite the fact that the traditional system was initially against the formation of political parties and preferred instead the traditional methods of choosing representatives, it ultimately formed its own political party, the Imbokodvo National Movement in 1964.[700] Although the traditional system eventually won the battle for power and led the country to independence in 1968 the unrest, however, had a lasting negative effect on the traditional system which ultimately resulted in the banning of political parties and the repression of trade unions in 1973.

The government's fears that the strikes were politically inclined were confirmed by Macdonald Moses, the visiting representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) who warned the colonial government that more political strikes were coming in Swaziland unless employers changed their attitude about industrial relations. He argued that long working hours, poor housing and sanitary conditions, arbitrary dismissals and lack of apprenticeship opportunities had caused so much dissatisfaction among the workers which politicians were easily able to exploit.[701] Politicians convinced workers that working and living conditions could only improve after they changed the regime in power. Writing on labour and politics in South Africa, Peter Alexander makes a similar observation when he argues that strikes in South Africa after 1948 were a challenge to apartheid.[702]

At the height of the strike workers sang their protest song, "*nkhosi sikelela i-Africa, maluphakanyiswe udumo lwakho yizwa imithandazo yethu, nkhosi sikelela thina usapho lwayo*"[703] meaning "Lord protect Africa, let your glory be praised, hear our prayers we, your children". The protest song demonstrates that workers were influenced by the nationalist struggle for independence throughout the continent during the early 1960s. The workers were

[700] Winter, "The Post-Colonial State…", p. 32.

[701] TOS, "More Political Strikes Feared by Moses", 4 October 1963.

[702] Alexander, *Workers, War and the Origins*, p. 8.

[703] Interview with Caleb Nkonyane, Bhunya, 6 October 2018; Interview with Aaron Dzingindzawo, Ndinda, 13 October 2018; Interview with Isaiah Dlamini, Ntondozi, 22 September 2018.

not only challenging poor working and living conditions but also colonialism. They were aware that the country had to gain independence from colonial rule first before their working and living conditions could improve.

The unrest signified the power of the workforce to champion their grievances and win some concessions from indifferent company officials. For instance, following the strike at Usuthu Pulp the company wasted no time and increased the accommodation for African workers. In 1964 the company sought the approval of the Board to build a 64-bed single men's hostel at Bhunya which was about 16 rooms which accommodated 4 persons per room. The company was hoping to build more houses for workers and allocate one room for each worker. Further about 8 or 9 Super "A" house types similar in design and standard (two bedrooms with living and dining rooms) to European houses were to be built for African workers in supervisory positions.[704] The unrest also compelled the Labour Officer to visit the Mhlume Sugar Company to check and monitor working and living conditions in the company with a view to recommending improvements. On his visit, the Labour Officer discovered that the company was already planning improvement in the standard and number of housing accommodation to African workers. The company acknowledged that the existing housing was "jerry-built and [was] not of a high enough standard to satisfy modern aspirations."[705]

The 1963 strikes emphasized that Swazi trade unionism had been born. The old Swazi system of imposed worker representation had died. African workers realized as never before that united they stand and divided they fall. The days when colonial capital could exploit workers at will were gone and gone forever. Through their demands the workers rejected the state-controlled organs such as the ACC because it was unrepresentative of the workers' interests and aspirations. The labour union at Usuthu Pulp is a good example of how workers perceived the state controlled organs. In their own words the workers argued that "the ACC was the Labour Officer's way of thwarting the workers' legitimate aspiration to be represented by a free democratic trade union organisation. We call upon the company to recognize the union as the

[704] SNA, File 3049W, Note by Labour Officer on his Visit to the Usuthu Pulp Company, 27th February 1964.

[705] SNA, File 3049W, Note by Labour Officer on his Visit to the Mhlume Sugar Company, 12th November 1963.

legitimate and sole agent to speak for and bargain collectively on behalf of all employees of the company."[706] The workers viewed the ACC as a hindrance to trade unionism by arguing that the development of trade unionism in the country suffered from the lack of support from colonial officials, employers as well as the monarchy.[707] In essence, the ACC was a strategy by the latter to diffuse and weaken trade unionism in the country.[708] By demanding the recognition of their union as the rightful and only body to negotiate on behalf of the workers, Usuthu Pulp workers were rejecting the ACC because it was unrepresentative of their aspirations and wanted their union to be the only mouthpiece through which they could collectively articulate their grievances. The workers at Usuthu Pulp are only used as an example here; otherwise this represents the general feeling among African workers in Swaziland. They were aware that organs such as the ACC as part of the management of the always sided with employers on conflicts involving workers and management. This demonstrates that workers were aware that the ACC did not represent their interests as a group. Thus, they wanted to replace the ACC with a body that will represent the workers' interests and aspirations. The failure of the system of worker representatives to satisfactorily address workers' grievances made them to form their own body which would be representative of their interests and aspirations.

Conclusion

The birth of trade unionism in the country against the background of anti-trade unionism and nationalist politics changed the history of labour in Swaziland in the early 1960s. It reflected a developed level of worker consciousness and solidarity both of which were largely absent in Swaziland in the preceding years. The growth and character of the workforce under different conditions and hurdles and the failure of the imposed worker representation system to satisfactorily redress workers' grievances led to the rise of trade unionism in Swaziland. From the mid-1940s to the early 1960s there was a substantial growth in the number of the labour force in the country which subsequently led to the growth and character of the workforce. This confirms Hamilton Simelane's argument that "the growth and expansion of employment

[706] SNA, File 3402/4, Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union to the Management of the Usuthu Pulp Company, 1 June 1963.

[707] See also, Dlamini, "The Legal Abolition…", p. 350.

[708] See also Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 179.

opportunities in Swaziland after the war gave rise to worker consciousness that in turn led to new forms of labour organization."[709] All forms of worker consciousness emanate from the workers' experiences from the work place. Before the early 1960s, the character of the workforce was still at an embryonic stage and growing gradually under different conditions and hurdles. Once the character and growth of the workforce had developed to embrace group consciousness trade unionism became inevitable. Further, the failure by the imposed workers' council system to satisfactorily redress workers' problems made workers to create trade unions since they realized that this system was not representing their interests and aspirations. The system had several important defects. Consequently, the workers as they resented the failure by the workers' councils to improve their poor working and living conditions and low wages. Thus, the early 1960s was a period in Swazi history when worker consciousness evolved from being largely individual and developed to embrace group consciousness.

The embryonic trade unions orchestrated successful strikes in which nearly all African workers participated, securing concessions from indifferent companies. The 1962 African workers' strike at Usuthu Pulp marked a new era of worker consciousness and also symbolized heightened awareness among African workers. It demonstrated that African workers would unite regardless of their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to articulate their grievances to the employer, and ultimately withdraw their labour en masse in order to force the company to redress their grievances. The workers saw the unions as their only mouthpiece and channel of communication through which they could air and champion their grievances at the company. The workers realized that they had common interests as a collective unit. As Jeff Crisp argues, "workers were…beginning to identify themselves as an occupational community with common interests and enemies. Moreover, they were beginning to express their collective identity in the language of class and conflict."[710]

The 1962 Usuthu Pulp strike triggered more labour protests which led to unrest in the country in 1963. The unrest owes it roots to old grievances which still persisted in 1963 much to the disgruntlement of the workers. Low wages, poor housing and sanitary conditions, arbitrary

[709] Simelane, *Colonialism*, p. 175.

[710] J. Crisp, *The Story of an African Working Class*, p. 65.

dismissals, lack of apprenticeship opportunities and the dearth of promotion opportunities, bad food, racial discrimination and unpaid overtime had caused so much dissatisfaction among the workers which they wanted to end. These were some unresolved grievances which the imposed workers' council system had failed to redress to the satisfaction of the workers. To demonstrate that they were able to collectively mobilize themselves to have their grievances resolved the workers withdrew their labour en masse and engaged in a wave of wildcat strikes making the country ungovernable and causing unrest. The 1963 strikes emphasized that Swazi trade unionism had been born. The old Swazi system of imposed worker representation had died. Through their demands the workers rejected the state-controlled organs such as the ACC because they were unrepresentative of the workers' interests and aspirations. The workers viewed the ACC not only an arm of management but also as a hindrance to trade unionism. Ultimately, workers formed trade unions which would be representative of their interests and aspirations. The 1963 unrest had a profound negative effect on the traditional system which ultimately resulted in the banning of political parties and the repression of trade unions in post-colonial Swaziland. The rise of trade unionism ultimately led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

CHAPTER 7

POST INDEPENDENCE POLITICS, NON-PARTY STATE AND LABOUR MILITANCY IN POST-COLONIAL SWAZILAND, 1968-2014

Introduction

When Swaziland achieved her independence in 1968 after over six decades of colonial rule, there were reasons to hope for a brighter future. Indeed, the attainment of independence brought a lot of optimism for many Swazis and in particular, the labour movement. The chapter critically reflects on the Swazi labour movement's experiences and its responses to the challenges it faced from independence to 2014. The labour movement's responses are discussed against the background of post-independence politics, state policies and labour militancy.

Firstly, the chapter examines the early post-colonial period to 1978 that saw the emergence of a centralized non-party *Tinkhundla* state which tended to view the labour movement as a threat to its hegemony. Even though trade unions were repressed alongside political parties, this chapter argues that the labour movement struck back and continued to fight for workers' rights and improved working and living conditions and wages. Secondly, the chapter argues that as the cost of living became unbearable in the 1990s the labour movement responded with militant protest actions. In the final analysis, the Swazi labour movement emerged as a significant opponent of the non-party state that has characterized much of post-colonial Swaziland. The labour movement was central to the widespread challenges to the authoritarian state in much of post-independence Swaziland.

Authoritarian regimes in post-colonial in Southern Africa

The post-colonial African state has captured the interest of scholars[711] who have analyzed the state from different perspectives. As Edmond J. Keller argues, "nowhere is the debate over the

[711] See for instance, R. Doorenspleet and L. Nijzink, "One-Party Dominance in African Democracies: A Framework for Analysis" in: R. Doorenspleet and L. Nijzink (eds.), *One-Party Dominance in African Democracies* (Lynne Rienner Publishers: USA, 2013); L. Sachikonye, "The Protracted Democratic Transition in Zimbabwe", *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol.13, 1 (2017); S. Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region: From One-Party State

state and state-centered research more vigorous than among Africanists."[712] In particular, the trajectory of political transitions in the Southern African region from the colonial to the post-colonial period has attracted scholarly interest.

In the post-colonial period many African states changed from multi-party democracy to authoritarian regimes. The authoritarian regimes assumed different forms which incluced one-party states, non-party states and military regimes. Renske Doorenspleet and Lia Nijzink, analyse one-party dominance in African democracies using six African countries; Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Mali, and Senegal. They define one-party-dominant systems as those party systems in which the same party wins an absolute majority in at least three consecutive elections. They argue, however, that this conceptualization of one-party dominance is not static and that by definition, a one-party-dominant system includes a time dimension because it extends over at least three elections.[713]

The chapter conceptualizes a non-party state as a state in which political parties are not active, at least in the context of the state. In a non-party state elections are contested outside the political party system through individuals from their constituencies. Lloyd Sachikonye, assessing Zimbabwe's transition from liberation to authoritarianism, argues that soon after removing the white regime of Ian Smith in 1980, the new ruling Zanu PF party was more committed to creating an authoritarian regime than creating a framework for democracy. The character of the authoritarian post-colonial state was soon reminiscent in civil conflict that witnessed large-scale violence, terror, and destruction in the southern and western provinces.[714] The chapter also

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to Multi-Party Democracy in Zambia and Lessons for Swaziland" in: A.M Kanduza and S.T. Mkhonza (eds.) *Issues in the Economy of Swaziland Since 1968*, (University of Swaziland: OSSREA, 2003); M. Larmer, "A Little Bit Like A Volcano-The United Progressive Party and Resistance to One-Party Rule in Zambia, 1964-1980", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 39, 1 (2006); Simelane, "Political Reforms.."; J. B. Mzizi, Political movements and challenges for democracy in Swaziland (Johannesburg: Issue 3 of Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) Research Report, 2005); M. Ndlangamandla, "The Rule of Sobhuza II and the Political Developments after his Death 1968-1983, BA Project, University of Swaziland, 1994; M. Mamba, "Tinkhundla: A Study of the System", M.A. Thesis, University of Swaziland, 2006.

[712] E.J. Keller, "The State in Contemporary Africa: A Critical Assessment of Theory and Practice" in: D. Rustow and K. Erickson (eds.), *Comparative Political Dynamics,* (1991), p. 134.

[713] Doorenspleet and Nijzink, "One-Party Dominance…", pp. 1-3.

[714] See Sachikonye, "The Protracted Democratic…", pp. 117-136.

demonstrates how post-colonial Swaziland was transformed from multi-party democracy to non-party *Tinkhundla* state immediately after independence. Further, the chapter analyses how the labour movement responded to non-party *Tinkhundla* state in post-colonial Swaziland.

Sitwala Mutonga discusses how democracy has evolved in post-colonial Africa. Using Zambia and Swaziland as examples, Mutonga argues that democracy was destroyed at its infancy stage in the post-colonial period. He further demonstrates how one-party state was imposed and later challenged in Zambia leading to the introduction of multi-party democracy.[715] Still on post-colonial Zambia, Miles Larmer argues that there was resistance to one-party rule in Zambia despite the general feeling that the ruling party represented the progressive aspirations and feelings held by the majority of Zambians. He adds, "the extent of popular discontent with the results of UNIP's first decade in government [was] far greater than has generally been assumed."[716] Similarly, the chapter discusses how embryonic multi-party democracy was destroyed immediately after independence and how the Swazi labour movement responded to it.

Canaan Simelane, tracing the political developments in Swaziland from the 1960s to post-independence argues that the traditional system led by King Sobhuza II dominated Swazi politics during this period. Simelane further traces post-colonial developments in Swaziland discussing the 1973 Decree and the introduction of the *Tinkhundla* system of government in 1978.[717] In the same vein Joshua B. Mzizi[718] argues that the 1972 elections led to the death of multi-party democracy in post-colonial Swaziland. He argues that the five year-dominance of the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM) was challenged for the first time in the 1972 elections by the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC). The NNLC received slightly more than 20% of the votes gaining the party three seats in Parliament. M. Ndlangamandla examines how political control in post-independence Swaziland was established by the traditional system under King Sobhuza II and how it led to the rise and growth of political movements opposing the status

[715] Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…".

[716] Larmer, "A Little Bit…", pp. 49-83.

[717] Simelane, "Political Reforms…".

[718] Mzizi, *Political movements*, p. 2.

quo.[719] Whereas Ndlangamandla focuses on how the imposition of the system led to the rise and growth of political movements opposing the status quo, this chapter focuses on how the Swazi labour movement responded to the imposition of this system.

Mahlaba Mamba[720] examines the establishment of the *Tinkhundla* system of government since 1978. Beginning by giving a background to the *Tinkhundla* system Mamba argues that the system of government was used as a tool for socio-economic and political development in Swaziland. Mamba further discusses how the system was reformed by King Mswati III in the 1990s. The chapter examines how the establishment of the *Tinkhundla* system shaped the development of the Swazi labour movement.

A. M. Kanduza[721] argues that the traditional system struggled to contain growing criticism from the Swazi population on the system of governance in post-colonial Swaziland. In particular, Kanduza argues that the slow economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s shaped the development of criticism from the middle class population. In response, Kanduza argues that the traditional system launched a fierce attack on liberal democracy. In the process the system has failed to come up with an alternative political system based on popular participation. It is mainly due to that reason that progressive organizations resolved to mobilize for regime transition. The chapter traces the role of the Swazi labour movement in criticizing the system of government in post-colonial Swaziland and how it responded to the state's firce attack on the workers. The literature on the post-colonial state in Southern Africa is very useful in putting the Swazi post-colonial state within the broader analysis of the states in the region. This helps in identifying similarities and peculiarities of the Swazi post-colonial states with other post-colonial states in the region and beyond.

[719] Ndlangamandla, "The Rule of Sobhuza II…".

[720] Mamba, "Tinkhundla…".

[721] A. M. Kanduza, "The Political Economy of Democratisation in Swaziland" in: K. K. Prah and A. G. M. Ahmed (eds.), *Africa in Transformation*, No. 2 (Cape Town: OSSREA, 2001).

The death of multi-party democracy in Swaziland, 1973-1978

Following the attainment of independence, the character of the Swazi post-colonial state changed completely from that of the colonial state. The transition from colonial to post-colonial state should be viewed from the lens of the larger perspective of the changing post-colonial states in Africa. Within a few years of independence, most African countries changed from multi-party democracy to one-party state systems.[722] Assessing multi-party democracy and it's relevance in Africa, K.K. Prah argues although many African states promised to maintain the democratic order that was created at independence they fell victims of autocracy and authoritarinanism immediately after independence.[723] The character of post-colonial African states can be discussed against the background of problems centering on political instability, leadership crises and economic stagnation. Richard Levin argues that generally, post-colonial African states have been characterized by the emergence of dominant middle class citizens who have asserted their control over the political systems of states to accumulate more wealth for themselves.[724] Edmond J. Keller, writing on the contemporary African state, argues that the ideology of the modern African state is a combination of traditional and foreign value systems. He adds that the contemporary African state is characterized by a weak economy based on production for export.[725] In the case of the post-colonial Swazi state Richard Levin argues that the traditional system led by King Sobhuza II, used its power to accumulate wealth by creating *Tibiyo TakaNgwane.*[726] The system later used *Tibiyo* as a strategy for partnering with foreign capital as well as a tool for acquiring shares for the monarchy in the country's major companies.[727] Hamilton Simelane argues that after World War II King Sobhuza sought to capitalize the

[722] Countries such as Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria and Mali, became one-party states where one man and or one party gained a virtual monopoly of power. See also, K. Matlosa, "From Multiparty to One-party Systems and Back: An Overview of Historical and Contemporary Trends" in: Political Parties in Southern Africa: The State of Parties and their Role in Democratization, Report for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 2007.

[723] K.K. Prah, "Multi-Party Democracy and It's Relevance in Africa", Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society, Cape Town, p. 2.

[724] R. Levin, "Is this the Swazi Way? State, Democracy and the Land Question", *Transformation*, Vol. 13 (1990).

[725] Keller, "The State in Contemporary Africa…", pp. 134-141.

[726] Tibiyo TakaNgwane was established by King Sobhuza II in 1968 after the re-investment of mineral rights to the king 'in trust for the nation'.

[727] Levin, "Is this the Swazi Way...", p. 60.

institution of the Swazi monarchy by collaborating with foreign capital and also venturing into business in the name of the Swazi nation.[728] However, the phrase 'venturing into business in the name of the Swazi nation' was only in principle; by and large the traditional system only enriched itself and protected its own economic and political interests marginalizing the vast majority of the population from any substantial gain.

Moreover, this emergence of bourgeois forces in post-colonial Africa was intertwined with the emergence of non-party states, one-party states and military regimes, with the exception of Botswana. These states had a common authoritative nature that went together with the use of force on the opposition. The accumulation of capital by the bourgeois classes hinged heavily on the power and strength of the authoritative regimes that emerged immediately after independence. Authoritative regimes were necessary tools to crush opposition to the capital accumulation and political domination of the bourgeois classes. The emergence of non-party states and authoritative regimes is a process which began in Africa immediately after the attainment of independence destroying the embryonic democracies that were introduced by the colonial powers at independence. Authoritative states were imposed in post-colonial Africa because the leaders wanted to stay permanently in power. The first generation of African leaders, according to Mutonga, were threatened by liberal democracy. They quickly destroyed the embryonic democracy by "…swiftly remov[ing] political choice, contestation and participation [and]… went further to erode the importance of parliament and judiciary"[729] despite that they assumed power through democratic multi-party elections.

The emergence of 'non-party' state in post-colonial Swaziland occurred five years after the attainment of independence against the background of a democratic system that was introduced on the eve of independence by the British. Swaziland is a 'non-party' state, at least within the context of the state. Since 1973 there have been no active political parties in the kingdom, despite the fact that political parties exist, albeit underground. Although the proscribed political parties operate underground constitutionaly, they were banned through the 1973 Decree which

[728] Simelane, "The colonial experience…", pp. 21-42.

[729] Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…", p. 92.

turned Swaziland into a non-party state. Further, national elections are contested through individulas from their constituencies not under political parties. This is despite the fact the country still follows the ideology and manifesto of the Imbokodvo National Movement. In this sense, the Swazi case is unique and different from states in post-colonial Southern Africa.

Whereas the British constitution guaranteed multi-partyism, mineral rights were vested in the King, rather than the government, which signals significant monarchic powers not usually held in constitutional monarchy settings.[730] At the dawn of independence multi-party democracy was established in Swaziland by the British who promoted a democratic inheritance of power at independence.[731] The British government had set the formation of political parties and democratic elections as pre-conditions for granting independence to Swaziland. They introduced a Westminster Constitution allowing for multi-party elections.[732] Thus, in the early 1960s a number of political parties were formed in Swaziland.[733] Each of these political parties aimed to draw support from the working class and defeat the Swazi traditional system and then govern the country upon attainment of independence. Although the traditional system mistrusted political parties and constitutional government since it felt they were incompatible with Swazi law, custom and tradition, it sought to protect monarchical interests and formed its own political party in 1964, the INM.[734] Subsequently, Swaziland achieved her independence through multi-party democratic elections. The INM won both the 1964 and 1967 elections and led Swaziland to independence. INM's victory secured the transfer of power from the British to the traditional system, a rare occurrence in the history of decolonization in Africa. In most African states

[730] See for instance, J. Baloro, "The Development of Swaziland's constitution: monarchical responses to modern challenges", *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 38, 1 (1994), pp. 19-34.

[731] A. Lee and J. Paine, "Did British Colonialism Promote Democracy? Divergent Inheritances and Diminishing Legacies", Paper presented at the University of Rochester's Comparative Politics Workshop on 28 August 2016.

[732] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 10.

[733] They include the Swaziland Progressive Party (SPP) which was founded in 1960 the Swaziland Democratic Party (SDP), the Ngwane National Liberation Congress (NNLC) which were founded in 1962 respectively and the Imbokodvo National Movement which was founded in 1964.

[734] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 10; Winter, "The Post-Colonial State…", p. 32.

power was transferred from the colonial powers to nationalist political parties. The NNLC remained in opposition, making Swaziland a liberal democratic country.[735]

In the wake of independence, after the traditionalists had finally secured power, the progressives were marginalized and the British effort to lead a transition towards multi-party democracy was quickly defused. The traditional system despised the western democratic style of leadership and pan-Africanism[736] which the radicals/progressives favoured. The progressives embraced a more democratic system based on pan-Africanism. They proposed the full implementation of the Westminster Constitution fused with modern ideologies of African nationalism in Swaziland. They were therefore viewed as a threat by the traditional system to their governance of the country in the post-independence period.[737]

Like in most African countries, the atmosphere of democracy in Swaziland barely existed after independence since it lasted for only five years. On 12 April 1973 Swaziland's political history changed. King Sobhuza II suspended the Independence Constitution with immediate effect banning all democratic civil and political freedoms of assembly, association and expression, thus ending the embryonic democracy in Swaziland.[738] This untimely death of embryonic democracy ended multi-party democracy in the country. Similarly, the banning of political parties in 1972 by the United Independence Party (UNIP) government marked the death of multi-party democracy in Zambia. On 13th December, 1972 President Kenneth Kaunda issued a presidential order which turned Zambia into a one-party state without consulting the electorate or their representatives in parliament. The opposition party, the ANC, was automatically demolished.[739] Two things can be said of the manner in which democracy was ended in Swaziland. Firstly, the

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[735] S. Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region: From one Party State to Multi-Party Democracy in Zambia and Lessons for Swaziland", p. 89.

[736] See for instance, H. Dlamini, "Constitutional Developments in the Kingdom of Swaziland, 1960-2005" PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2016, pp. 45-57.

[737] See also Dlamini, "Constitutional Development…", pp. 45-48.

[738] Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973. See also, TOS, "Why Sobhuza Repealed the 1968 Constitution", 42nd Independence Supplement, 3 September, 2010; D. Motsamai, Institute for Security Studies Situation Report, 15 August 2012.

[739] Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…", p. 90.

monarchy completely sidelined the political parties from the game of politics. Secondly, the monarchy replaced the western democratic system with the *Tinkhundla* system of traditional rule that rooted monarchical dictatorship.[740]

In the period between 1973 and 1978 Swaziland was governed by King Sobhuza with the assistance of five ministers. The ending of multi-party democracy in Swaziland gave the traditional system the opportunity to control government, making the government synonymous to the system. Consequently, any form of criticism made against the government was viewed as a direct attack on the monarchy. Open opposition, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association, a culture that had prevailed during decolonization, was restricted. A new system of *Tinkhundla* government was imposed by King Sobhuza II in 1978 completely shattering any remaining hopes of democracy in Swaziland. Since the traditional system despised democracy and political parties it tended to view the labour movement not only as an extension of political parties but also as a threat to its hegemony.

The king's proclamation not only suspended the Independence Constitution but more significantly, vested all legislative, executive and judicial powers in the king thus elevating him to a status above any law in the country denying the people of Swaziland the right to associate freely, to assemble, to organize, and or to speak out. The proclamation exempted the monarch from legal accountability granting the king absolute authority over all branches of government. The proclamation stated: "Now THEREFORE I, SOBHUZA II, King of Swaziland, hereby declare that, in collaboration with my Cabinet Ministers and supported by the whole nation, I have assumed supreme power in the Kingdom of Swaziland and that all Legislative, Executive and Judicial power is vested in [me]."[741] Ruling by decree, the Swazi traditional system introduced a series of repressive laws over the next two decades that sought to maintain political domination. State power was concentrated in the hands of the authoritarian character of the king in collaboration with the SNC, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. Members of the opposition were subjected to detention without trial and meetings of more than 4 people were not

[740] See also, Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…", p. 91.

[741] Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973.

permissible.[742] The country was governed with an iron fist for the most part of post-colonial period. As Mutonga states, authoritarian states failed to uphold the basic fundamental human rights that were championed during the decolonization process. Instead, harsh measures such as intimidation, detention without trial and state of emergency were used as tools to silence the people. State security forces were used as instruments to instill fear into the people. That fear was one of the major reasons why authoritarian states have survived for a long time in some countries.[743]

One is left to ponder over questions, why was the constitution repealed after only five years? Why did it take five years to repeal the constitution if it was unworkable? One could argue that the traditional system, under the leadership of King Sobhuza II, repealed the Westminster Constitution for several reasons. Firstly, from the outset the traditionalists were against the western style of leadership. As already argued, the traditional system despised the western democratic style of leadership and pan-Africanism that came with the Independence Constitution. However, the conditions set by the British before they could grant independence to Swaziland forced the traditional system to accept the constitution. Section 2(e) of the king's proclamation clearly illustrates the traditional system's bitterness with the Westminster Constitution when it states; "that I and all my people heartily desire at long last, after a long constitutional struggle, to achieve full freedom and independence under a constitution created by ourselves for ourselves in complete liberty without outside pressures; as a nation we desire to march forward progressively under our own constitution guaranteeing peace, order and good government and the happiness and welfare of all our people."[744] Thus, despite the fact that the traditional system was against the formation of political parties and preferred instead the traditional methods of choosing representatives, it ultimately formed its own political party, the INM in 1964.[745] Also, although the advocates of the system mistrusted political parties and constitutional government since they felt they were incompatible with Swazi law, custom and

[742] See Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973.

[743] Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…", p. 92.

[744] See Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973.

[745] Winter, "The Post-Colonial State…", p. 32.

tradition, by forming their own political party they sought to protect the system's interests. Secondly, the traditionalists were against the formation of trade unions in the country, which the 1968 Constitution endorsed. The traditional system hated trade unions for their ability to challenge the status quo and call for democracy. The system viewed trade unionism as a threat to its hegemony and influence in the country. Further, the system resented trade unions because it was widely believed that they caused industrial unrest through strikes. Furthermore, the traditionalists were capitalists since they owned shares in the country's major industries and therefore despised trade unions for demanding improved wages and living and working conditions. These had a direct negative effect on their profit, thus like other capitalists, the traditionalists sought to minimize costs and maximize profits. Finally, the Independence Constitution was blamed for the 1962 African workers' strike at Usuthu Pulp and the 1963 Labour Unrest which not only confirmed the traditionalists' worst fears about trade unions but also left a bitter taste on them. Section 2(b) of the King's Proclamation illustrates this bitterness well when it states; "that the Constitution is indeed the cause of growing unrest, insecurity, dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in our country and an impediment to free and progressive development in all spheres of life."[746] The strikes besides causing industrial unrest and loss of revenue, developed along sinister lines. The traditionalists further resented the fact that the workers ignored orders from the king to end the strikes. This was viewed as a sign of disrespect on the part of the workers and loss of dominion by the traditional system on its people. Moreover, the advocates of the traditional system feared the alliance between the workers and political parties that was demonstrated during the labour unrest. Such an alliance was a great threat to the hegemony of the system and influence, particularly having seen how the combined strength of labour and politics caused the collapse of apartheid in neighbouring South Africa. Thus, when they assumed power the traditionalists did not hesitate to replace the Independence Constitution with the 1973 Decree, which banned political parties and repressed trade unions and allowed for introduction the *Tinkhundla* system of government. If they could not ban trade unions at least they could repress them and have controlled trade unions in the form of African Consultative Committees (ACC).

[746] See Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973; see also King Sobhuza II's Speeches: His Majesty's Speech during the Repeal of the Westminster Constitution at Lobamba, 12th April 1973.

The repeal of the 1968 Independence Constitution was sparked off by the country's first post-independence national elections which were held in May 1972. In essence, the 1972 elections led to the death of embryonic democracy in post-colonial Swaziland.[747] For the first five years after independence the INM ruled without opposition in parliament as they won all seats in 1967. However, the dominance of the INM was challenged by the NNLC in the 1972 elections. The latter received slightly more than 20% of the votes gaining themselves 3 seats in Parliament from economically influential constituencies in the Lubombo region. These were sugar plantation constituencies where workers were dissatisfied with the government over working conditions and thus supported the NNLC. The NNLC's strides shook the traditional system which viewed this development as a threat to its hegemony. The INM, in a smear propaganda campaign, questioned Thomas Bhekindlela Ngwenya's nationality, one of the NNLC's members who were supposed to occupy a seat in parliament. The INM claimed that Ngwenya was not eligible to occupy a seat in parliament since he was not Swazi but South African even though his parents were clearly Swazi. Consequently, there was a protracted dispute over his nationality which ended in the Court of Appeal of Swaziland. Following Ngwenya's appeal victory the INM-controlled parliament declared that the 1968 Independence Constitution was not feasible and requested the King to resolve the crisis.[748] The traditionalists begrudged the court ruling which reversed the deportation of Mr. Ngwenya and viewed this as a direct challenge to the hegemony and influence of the system. Convinced that the constitution was unworkable and alien to the Swazi, on 12 April 1973 the King issued a proclamation repealing the 1968 Independence Constitution. However, the real issue was not Mr. Ngwenya's nationality status but that the opposition had gained three seats in Parliament, which was perceived as a serious challenge to the hegemony of the traditional system. To the traditionalists the problem lay with the constitution which allowed for multi-party democracy, thus the repeal of the constitution was necessary to avoid a similar impasse in the future. There is lack of evidence to prove that there was a threat to the Swazi government and conditions throughout the country were calm. The traditionalists were motivated by fears that an opposition party might eventually grow to threaten their hegemony to rule Swazis as they saw fit.

[747] See also Mzizi, *Political movements,* p. 2.

[748] See also H. Sereo, "The Contribution of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) to Democratic Change in Swaziland, 1983-2013, PhD Thesis, University of Zululand, 2016, p.34.

It is very fascinating to note that the traditionalists punched holes in the constitution when the opposition made strides to challenge their dominancy, however, when things were going their way the constitution was tolerated. Between 1964 and 1972 political developments were working in the favour of the traditionalists. The INM won both the 1964 and 1967 independence elections. During this period parliament was pretty much an INM show since every available parliamentary seat was occupied by the INM. In essence, the traditionalists were prepared to tolerate the Independence Constitution so long as it suited them. When the opposition gained 3 seats in parliament the traditionalists remembered that the constitution was imposed by the colonial government. They declared that the Constitution had failed arguing

> that the Constitution has indeed failed to provide the machinery for good government and for the maintenance of peace and order… that the Constitution has permitted the importation into our country of highly undesirable political practices alien to, and incompatible with the way of life in our society and designed to disrupt and destroy our own peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity; increasingly this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society.[749]

The only option, according to the traditionalists, was to repeal the Independence Constitution and form a new constitution which will have the interests and aspirations of the Swazi populace, since the Westminster Constitution was not modifiable.

The 1973 Decree had political implications for the country and its people. Firstly, the Decree rescinded the 1968 Independence Constitution and created a political vacuum since there was no constitution with which to govern the country until 1978. In the absence of a constitution the king ruled the country through decree for the next five years until the establishment *Tinkhundla* System of government in 1978. Secondly, the repeal of the constitution ended the embryonic multi-party democracy that was introduced on the eve of independence by banning political parties in the country. It also transformed the country from multi-party democracy to non-party state dictatorship. Further, all democratic civil and political freedoms of assembly, association and expression were prohibited in the country.[750] Consequently, post-colonial Swaziland was

[749] Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973.

[750] See also, H. Kuper, *Sobhuza II, Ngwenyama and King of Swaziland* (London: Duckworth, 1978), p. 336.

transformed from a multi-party democratic state to a non-party *Tinkhundla* state rooted in dictatorship. Between 1973 and 1978, King Sobhuza II ruled without an elected Parliament, making laws by decree. Further, the repeal of the constitution firmly placed the king above the law in the land and made him an absolute monarch since all legislative, executive and judicial powers were vested in the king.

Swaziland became a state where there was no room for opposition to the decree. Opposition to the absolute monarch and non-party state was banned. To strike more fear to the opposition, the king made a public announcement that the army and police were posted in all strategic places and buildings to maintain law and order. Through the proclamation Sobhuza declared; "…to ensure the continued maintenance of peace, order and good government, my Armed Forces in conjunction with the Swaziland Royal Police have been posted to all strategic places and have taken charge of all government and all public services."[751] This suggests that the decree was not done with the support of the nation, thus it was not done in the best interest of the Swazi populace. To further intimidate the progressives a state of emergency was declared and detention without trial was introduced. The fact that the decree was followed by a state of emergency also suggests that it was not done in the best interest of the nation; otherwise it would not have been necessary.

Critics of the system which comprised the labour movement and the proscribed political parties were either harassed or detained for expressing dissenting views from those held by traditionalists. These laws reflected the main features of the apartheid system in South Africa. Such harsh measures were introduced not only to silence the people but to also instill fear in them. A state of emergency was a necessary coercive tool to control the state. Kenneth Kaunda, the first African Zambian leader, confirmed this argument when he testified in 1991 that "the state of emergency… though abused by the security forces, but when you measure that against stability that the state of emergency had provided Zambia, you will agree with me that we need to keep the state of emergency…"[752]

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[751] Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973.

[752] Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…", p. 92.

The repeal of the Westminster Constitution did not bring about significant changes for Swazi workers in post-independence Swaziland. To begin with, the structure of the colonial economy was not profoundly changed. The domestic economy continued to be dominated by white settlers, British and foreign capital (mostly South African).[753] Their leading role was not altered as long as they did not threaten the traditional system's political hegemony. Laterza argues that "throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, workplaces remained under the firm control of whites and foreigners, with middle and top management positions largely occupied by whites."[754] However, the massive presence of South African capital had a negative impact on the workers. For instance, it was one of the major contributing factors in keeping the main features of the apartheid workplace regime in post-colonial Swazi workplaces. Further, wages for Swazi workers remained very low. Trade unions, which unlike political parties remained legal after 1973, became the only source which expressed the dissatisfaction of Swazi workers. The traditional system made it clear that it was unsympathetic to labour demands and the government proved generally hostile towards unions. Thus, despite that most trade unions managed to gain recognition in many companies and challenged the works council system, threats to their efficiency swarmed.

The imposition of the Tinkhundla system of government in 1978

In 1978 King Sobhuza imposed a new system of government called *Tinkhundla* to run the country following the political vacuum that was created by the repeal of the 1968 Constitution. The Swazi parliamentary system, as the *Tinkhundla* is sometimes called, was established to replace the multi-party democracy introduced by the British at the dawn of independence. The traditionalists insisted on the establishment and implementation of a system of government which would suit the interests, aspirations and values of the entire Swazi populace. The 1973 King's Proclamation spoke about a constitution created by the Swazi people for themselves derived from Swazi tradition independent from outside influence.[755] However, this was only in principle, in practice the new system was created by the traditionalists without consulting the

[753] See also J. Daniel, "The Political Economy of Colonial and Post-Colonial Swaziland", 1982, pp. 100-102 www.http//: disa.ukzn.ac.za.

[754] Laterza, "Resilient Labour…", p. 579.

[755] Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April, 1973.

entire Swazi population. Thus, it represented the political interests and aspirations of the traditionalists who were hell-bent on protecting their hegemony. Public opinion, through a referendum, was never considered when the Independence Constitution was repealed and also when the *Tinkhundla* system was introduced. Thus, it was imposed on the Swazi populace. The constitution was rescinded to safeguard the interests of the traditionalists, who had never favoured the Westminster Constitution from the onset, anyway. On the contrary, the *Tinkhundla* system was imposed through the Swaziland Order of 1978 and consolidated through the King's Proclamation No.1 of 1981 in a period of a state of emergency.[756] This marked the beginning of the country's non-party *Tinkhundla* political system.

In 1977 when Parliament's term was about to elapse, King Sobhuza II announced that the country would be governed through traditional institutions. Members of Parliament would be elected through an indirect system centering upon regional centres (Tinkhundla). Although Seroe argues that "this system was designed to prevent the modernists and reformers gaining even the smallest foothold in the political arena"[757] constitutionally individuals who were modernists and reformers could also participate in the system. The establishment of the *Tinkhundla* system marked the beginning of a non-party state characterized by the prohibition of freedom of speech and assembly and the use of repressive laws such as detention without trial to frighten any form of opposition.

The timing of the introduction of the Tinkhundla system was very critical. The traditionalists chose the time well. The situation was sufficiently under control to introduce a new system of government. The decree had effectively banned political parties and the state of emergency was firmly operative. Opponents were silenced and the repressive laws brought fear to them. In 1978, King Sobhuza II, certain that the Swazi populace had no chance to reject the new system re-established Parliament through a constitutional framework that became known as the *Tinkhundla* system of governance.[758]

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[756] See also Mzizi, *Political Movements*, p. 13.

[757] Sereo, "The Contribution of the People's United Democratic Movement…", p. 40.

[758] See also Mzizi, *Political Movements*, p. 13.

The establishment of the system attracted a lot of debate from both critics and supporters. Resistance to the *Tinkhundla* system of government became profound in the mid-1980s. Although strong opposition can be seen with the formation of an underground political movement such as PUDEMO, open opposition to the system then became or grew visible and widespread afterwards through the labour movement. The labour movement has never been shy to openly criticize and condemn both the 1973 Decree and the *Tinkhundla* system throughout post-colonial Swaziland despite widespread state repression and violation of human rights. It is for this reasons that criticism of both the 1973 Decree and *Tinkhundla* system of government has dominated grievances of the labour movement during labour protests throughout post-colonial Swaziland. This does not in any way demonstrate "the importation of highly undesirable political practices which were alien to, and incompatible with the Swazi way of life and designed to disrupt and destroy the Swazi peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity which created hostility, bitterness and unrest in Swazi peaceful society" by workers as the traditionalists made us believe. Rather, it demonstrates a working class wrestling with a myriad of challenges trying to communicate their feelings and needs the only way they knew how, through labour protests.

The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the state and international organisations

The history of the SFTU comprises of both triumphs and setbacks. "Unlike political parties and other pro-democracy groups, trade unions have had a legal basis from which to operate provided by various Industrial Relations Acts which have been in effect, dating to the period before independence, which define rules for the collective negotiation of terms and conditions of employment and dispute resolution mechanisms."[759] The various labour legislations gave the SFTU the basis to demand and champion workers' rights despite operating in a repressive environment.

When the Swaziland Pulp and Timber Workers' Union was formed in 1962 it made it clear that it envisaged a time when all unions of Swaziland would unite under a Swaziland Federation of

[759] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 27.

Labour and committed itself to working towards the formation of such a federation.[760] Indeed, a federation of labour the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) was eventually formed at a meeting held in Mbabane Central High School on the 19th October 1971. The federation was formed by the Swaziland Miners and General Workers' Union, the Swaziland Citrus Plantations, Agricultural and Allied Workers' Union, the Amalgamated Union of Ngwane Commercial Industrial Workers' Union, the Swaziland Bank Workers' Union, the Swaziland Government Industrial Workers' Union and the Swaziland National of Civil Servants.[761] Membership of the SFTU eventually rose to 83,000 in 2012 with workers from 21 unions covering a wide range of workers from agriculture, construction, mining, and manufacturing to employment in banking, tertiary educational institutions, town councils and the public service.[762] It took almost two years for the federation to be registered since it was registered on 23rd March 1973 through the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO).[763] The fact that the SFTU was registered two years after of its formation and through the support of ILO suggests that the state was reluctant to register the federation. This was unsurprising given the anti-trade union stance of the state.

Within a short period after its formation, the SFTU began working for workers' rights and recognition both locally and internationally. In 1975 through pressure from the SFTU Swaziland became a member of ILO. The SFTU managed to strengthen links with international organisations such as International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). These links helped the SFTU to profile the Swazi case internationally which resulted in World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), COSATU and individual leaders like Ray Alexander of South Africa to pledge support for the Swazi workers' struggle to force the government of Swaziland to ratify the ILO conventions. Further, the SFTU managed to engage these international organisations to report the country to ILO that the delegation sent by the

[760] TOS, "Statement by Pulp Mill Management on the Strike", 13 April 1962.

[761] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years of Unbroken Workers' Struggles in Swaziland: 1960-2012*, (TUCOSWA, 2013), p. 33.

[762] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 40.

[763] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 33.

government of Swaziland to the Geneva International Labour Conference, was not representative of worker organisations, but were police officers. This forced the country to genuinely sponsor the participation of genuine worker representatives in the ILO conference in 1976. Thus, the first delegation of genuine worker representatives to participate in the International Labour Conference was led by Nomthetho Simelane.[764]

After becoming a member of the ILO, Swaziland worked towards ratifying the ILO Conventions. In 1975, for instance, the country ratified 15 ILO Conventions which helped to establish the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) in 1977 comprising the Government, SFTU and employers' representatives to provide for tripartite consultations on labour related issues.[765] In essence, the LAB was established in compliance with ILO Conventions. In 1977, the country was mandated by ILO to bring its labour legislations in line with international labour standards and then localize the industrial relations law, especially after the country ratified Conventions 87 and 98 that guaranteed freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. The LAB gave birth to the Employment and Industrial Relations Acts of 1980 which were later passed into law on 28 September 1980. Although reasons for enacting these acts into law remain unclear, in particular with scant evidence of pressure from the SFTU, it appears the state was under pressure from the international community to approve these acts. The LAB further facilitated the establishment of the Labour Court called the Industrial Court today. The SFTU further assigned trade unions to capacitate their members on these laws. The Workers Education Department at the ILO and OATUU helped in educating members on basic trade unionism. The programmes run by these organisations bore fruits in 1983 as a number of trade unions were formed and registered namely; the Swaziland Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union (SAPAWU), Swaziland Commercial and Allied Workers' Union (SCAWU), Swaziland Union of Financial Institutions (SUFIAW), Swaziland Manufacturing and Allied Workers' Union (SMAWU) and Swaziland Transport Workers' Union (STAWU). These unions strengthened the SFTU, which was then about a 10 years old. In 1992, however, six unions including SCAWU, SUFIAW and SMAWU

[764] Nomthetho Simelane was an executive member of the SFTU at the time. See also, Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, pp. 33-34.

[765] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 34.

split from the SFTU to form the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL).[766] The SFL in 1994 reported it had 12 affiliates and 20,000 members in manufacturing, IT, retail, finance, media and other occupations.[767]

The split was caused by problems bothering on the limitations of the leadership of the SFTU. Firstly, there were differences between the federation's executive members. Apparently, some affiliates, in particular SAPAWU, was not happy with the way the SFTU was administered. According to Simon Mvubu, "there was lack of democracy within the SFTU which made the executive members from SAPAWU to be unhappy."[768] Thulani Mngometulu substantiates Mvubu's claim when he blames the SFTU's Secretary General, Jan Sithole, for the split because he believes he was autocratic and manipulative. In his own words Mngometulu argued that "you can't preach democracy and practice autocracy."[769] The refusal by Jabulani Nxumalo and Richard Nxumalo, of SUFIAWU and SESMAWU respectively, to resign from the SFTU executive following their unions split from the SFTU demonstrates lack of democracy.[770] In a democratic union leaders are accountable to the general membership which was not the practice within the SFTU. Secondly, the split was caused by lack of transparency and accountability that coupled with corruption on the part of the executive. It is alleged that there was lack of accountability on financial records by the federation's executive members. The Secretary General was accused of failing to account for E300, 000.00 which was for the ex-mine workers' project.[771] A 2005 report by COSATU reveals that the Secretary General made financial transactions without the Treasurer's consent and that the SFTU had not had a financial statement since 1999.[772] The SFTU executive was further accused of hiding financial discrepancies and

[766] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years,* p. 34.

[767] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 40.

[768] Interview with Simon Mvubu, Bethany, 7 June 2019.

[769] Interview with Thulani Mngometulu, Manzini, 8 June 2019.

[770] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years,* p. 64.

[771] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years,* pp. 55-57.

[772] http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/SAK-Swazinewsletter in: Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years,* pp. 56-57.

looting federation property. This was in relation to the federation's motor vehicle which was taken to a garage for fixing but was paid for by an individual executive member who then assumed ownership of the federation's asset.[773] Thirdly, the split was caused by the lack of information dissemination to members and other executive members of the federation. For instance, information about international trips was not relayed to all members within the federation's executive to the extent that some executive members were not privy to the international activities the federation was involved in or who participated on behalf of the federation on such forums. Lastly, the split was caused by lack of feedback on the matters that the federation was pursuing. These included the celebration of workers' day and the 27 Demands Task Force.[774] It appears that the causes of the split are centered on the executive of the SFTU. The split from the SFTU demonstrates the dynamics of labour. It shows that Swazi labour was differentiated and not a monolithic entity that behaved uniformly. Some affiliates of the SFTU were unhappy with the way in which the federation was administered and decided to break away and form their own federation.

It is worth noting that some unions, SESMAWU, SPTWU and SMQAWU that split to form the SFL eventually rejoined the SFTU. This process was staggered since the unions did return at the same time since they did not make a resolution to return to the SFTU. They returned at different times. Interestingly, Jabulani Nxumalo and Richard Nxumalo retained their executive positions despite that their unions had left the federation to form the SFL. These leaders acted against the decision of their respective union members to resign from the SFTU.[775] This demonstrates that these leaders were not answerable to their unions since they defied orders from their respective union members. They were no longer serving the interests of their unions but their own individual interests. Shedding more light on the return of some unions to the SFTU Simon Mvubu testified that "some affiliates of the SFL demanded cooperation between their federation and the SFTU. The refusal by some affiliates to cooperate with the SFTU caused some unions to

[773] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years,* pp. 55-57.

[774] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years,* pp. 55-57.

[775] Interview with Simon Mvubu, Bethany, 7 June 2019; Interview with Thulani Mngometulu, Manzini, 11 June 2019. See also, Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years,* p. 64.

break away from the SFL to rejoin the SFTU."[776] "Some unions which split from the SFTU neither joined the SFL nor returned to the SFTU. SNACS for instance would be suspended for one reason or another as a way of frustrating the union's return to the SFTU."[777] The return to the SFTU by some SFL affiliates demonstrates that Swazi labour was not a homogeneous entity that behaved uniformly.

Although the SFTU faced challenges both from within and from the state and employers, it was able to confront issues faced by workers in much of post-colonial Swaziland and championed workers' demands and rights. Although the success of the federation is yet to be proven, the SFTU has been viewed by many as an effective national and international player that successfully carried the hopes and aspirations of the labour movement. Consequently, the membership of the SFTU swelled, particularly in the 1990s. By 2012, total trade union membership was estimated to be over 100,000.[778]

Unlike other civil society groups Swazi federations and trade unions enjoy close relations with international groups through their affiliation with the ITUC. These connections were made possible by the ILO Conventions and complaint system, through which Swazi trade unions were able to report abuses committed by the Swazi government.[779] For several years, Swaziland was placed on the special paragraph[780] in annual reports of the ILO for denial of workers' rights guaranteed under ILO conventions.[781] Muzi Mhlanga argues that "when a country is placed on the ILO's special paragraph it becomes the 'skunk' of the world."[782] Consequently, "the ILO has repeatedly sent missions, [at different levels,] to Swaziland that have reported back on the government's non-compliance with an ILO convention as well as crimes by government's

[776] Interview with Simon Mvubu, Bethany, 7 June 2019.

[777] Interview with Thulani Mngometulu, Manzini, 11 June 2019.

[778] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 26.

[779] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 27.

[780] A special paragraph is the ILO's most stringent sanction against a government.

[781] See for instance, Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, pp. 40-41.

[782] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, 26 January, 2019.

security forces against union activists including intimidation, kidnapping, unlawful entry into and search of homes, torture and death while in detention."[783]

Apart from enjoying stronger ties with international organisations, the SFTU has also enjoyed stronger linkages with federations from the Southern African region and within the African Union. In particular, the SFTU has enjoyed the support of COSATU. Condemning the arrest of three SFTU leaders during 27 Demands campaign the South African federation issued very strong comments towards the Government of Swaziland when it stated that

> COSATU supports the national general strike organised by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) and other progressive organisations. The fact that the strike has the support of the vast majority of workers and other democrats, demonstrates beyond any doubt that the demands of the strike are justified and popular. At this point and time, and the era in which we are, we do not believe that people should be denied an opportunity to influence political processes and decision making. We are perturbed to learn that three leaders of the SFTU were arrested last night. The Swaziland government, instead of entering into genuine negotiations with SFTU on the strike demands, they have chosen to use one of their many draconian laws to arrest the three leaders. COSATU condemns the arrest of SFTU President Richard Nxumalo, SFTU General Secretary Jan Sithole and SFTU Deputy Secretary General Jabulani Nxumalo. We are calling on the Swaziland government to unconditionally release these leaders and enter into negotiations with SFTU on the demands outlined by the SFTU. COSATU is going to ask the Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Committee (SATUCC) to monitor the situation closely. Should the Swaziland government refuse to release these leaders, COSATU will request the holding of a special SATUCC Executive meeting to consider forms of solidarity action to be taken by the Southern African region.[784]

The above quotation indicates that the SFTU got the support of the COSATU which acted in solidarity with its counterparts in Swaziland.

It should be noted, however, that the relationship between the SFTU and COSATU was not always good. For instance, in 2006 the SFTU's failure to participate in the border blockade organized by COSATU raised questions about the relationship of the two union federations. Although the failure by the SFTU to join the border blockade was explained in terms of

[783] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, pp. 26-27.

[784] COSATU on Swaziland national general strike, COSATU press statement, 23 January 1996.

breakdown in communication and not misunderstanding between the two union federations it suggested that there were cracks in the relationship. The SFTU executive, however, was quick to deny allegations of a rift with COSATU. The SFTU's Secretary General Jan Sithole in a statement issued to the *Times of Swaziland*, confirmed the federation's "strong and reserved support of the action and the agreement with the issues for which the blockade was called."[785]

The SFTU, labour militancy and *Tinkhundla* system in post-colonial Swaziland, 1977-2012

Against the background and atmosphere of non-party state the Swazi labour movement grew in dissatisfaction and frustration. The 1973 king's proclamation had effectively suppressed political parties and declared a state of emergency in Swaziland. Trade unions, although not banned through the king's proclamation, were closely monitored and if they refused to toe the line they were to be banned. Mostly through the SFTU and SNAT, the labour movement challenged the imposition of non-party state since they were aware that it influenced the outcome of wages and working and living conditions. Working and living conditions remained poor and the standards of living deteriorated as wages for workers did not improve in post-colonial Swaziland. The SFTU and SNAT organised a number of strikes demanding improved working and living conditions and wages. Further, the labour movement also had a political dispensation about their country since they demanded transition from non-party state to multi-party democracy. Consequently, the centralized non-party *Tinkhundla* state viewed the labour movement as a threat to its hegemony.

The 1973 king's proclamation and the state of emergency did not deter the labour movement from demanding improved working conditions and wages. Through the teachers' union and bankers' union, the Swazi workers' struggle for improved working conditions and wages continued.[786] Barely four years after king's proclamation and state of emergency the teachers' union was engaged in protest action. In October 1977 teachers, through the Swaziland National Union of Teachers (SNUT), were engaged in strike action for poor working conditions and low wages although the strike also demonstrated subversive elements. After protracted efforts by the

[785] TOS, "There is no rift between SFTU, COSATU-Jan", 12 April 2006.

[786] Report by the Solidarity Center, Justice for all: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Swaziland, September 2006.

teachers to have their salaries reviewed and working conditions improved failed, a resolution was taken to engage in strike action to force government to address their grievances.[787] As the cost of living became higher for the teachers, they demanded government to review their wages in 1976. The teachers under the banner of SNUT marched to *Ludzidzini* royal kraal to present their bread and butter issues in which they gave the authorities an ultimatum for a year to redress their grievances. Failure by the authorities to redress the teachers' demands led to militant strike action in 1977.[788] The fact that the teachers presented their grievances to the authorities at *Ludzidzini* royal kraal and not government offices indicates that they were aware that the final decision lay with the traditional authorities not government officials. In the period of the state of emergency teachers were aware that the traditional leadership controlled government. From another perspective, the teachers were appealing to the authorities as the highest court in the land for improved wages, working and living conditions. Since all their efforts to have improved wages and conditions of service were always met with a deaf ear by government, the teachers sought to explore the traditional route in order for their grievances to be addressed. Swazi tradition allowed the Swazi populace to appeal to their authorities whenever they felt aggrieved. The teachers, aware of this tradition, exploited it to their advantage and appealed to the authorities.

The teachers' strike triggered a students' strike where there were reports of tearing the national flag, singing political songs and stoning government vehicles by the students.[789] This demonstrates that the strike had a salient political aspect. The tearing of the national flag, singing of political songs and stoning of government vehicles is clear demonstration that there was anger towards the state. In the post-1973 Decree period this anger was directed at the state for imposing the king's proclamation and state of emergency. To the students the state was responsible for the teachers' strike which resulted in them losing classes. Subsequently, the state responded by banning the teachers' union although it re-emerged in the 1980s under disguise.[790]

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[787] Russon, "Social Movements…", p. 76.

[788] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland: *Celebrating 52 Years*, 53.

[789] Russon, "Social Movements…", pp. 82-83.

[790] Russon, "Social Movements…", pp. 82-83.

In the interim, the teachers' union operated under the disguise of a body of professionals and used sporting bodies, cultural groupings and other academic platforms to advance its course as a union. This entailed achieving complete organizational and membership sustainability and stability, representing aspirations of members and also participating in international forums that sought to advance the global interests of the teaching profession generally.[791] This demonstrates that teachers designed survival tactics under a repressive environment. The teachers eventually changed the union's name to that of an association, the Swaziland National Teachers' Association (SNAT) as another survival strategy.[792] As already stated, trade unions were closely monitored and if they refused to toe the line they were to be banned. Thus, the strike gave the state the opportunity to ban the teachers' union. However, the teachers struck back at government and re-emerged as an association. This was just a name change; the objectives were still those of the union. A majority of former teachers agree that the name change did not have any implications in the way the organisation handled its matters, particularly in relation to addressing their grievances with the employer. However, some few radical members of SNAT then provided a dissenting view arguing that the name change had a negative effect since it made the union less effective.[793] Although some commentators strongly believe that the 1976-1977 Soweto riots in neighbouring South Africa had an influence on the strike, the study argues that these were workers and students wrestling with and responding to the challenges they faced. Despite that such an argument takes away Swazi agency from the 1977 teachers' strike and subsequent student riots there is no evidence showing that this strike was linked to the Soweto riots.

The 1990s were, perhaps, one of the busiest periods of labour action in the history of labour in Swaziland. During this period the Swazi labour movement gained momemntum and emerged as an active player in Swazi society. The labour movement took advantage of the 1980 Employment Act and the Industrial Relations Act[794] and addressed problems bothering on poor

[791] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland: *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 54.

[792] Russon, "Social Movements…", pp. 82-83.

[793] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland: *Celebrating 52 Years*, 53.

[794] These acts were enacted by the Swazi Government with the help of the ILO.

working and living conditions and low wages for workers. By the end of the 1980s the Swazi labour movement had developed into a coherent movement ready to launch attacks in order to champion the workers' demands.[795] Continued poor working and living conditions coupled with the suppression of trade unions through the 1973 Decree helped develop militancy among the workers. As the cost of living became unbearable in the 1990s, the labour movement responded with a series of militant protest actions. Both the SFTU and SNAT launched a series of strikes demanding improved working conditions and wages for workers. The two were the country's largest labour organizations which also commanded a huge following. In the 1990s, after the King's Decree had effectively banned political parties[796], the labour movement became the sole voice expressing not only workers' frustrations but also aspirations of political parties which challenged the state. This created a very strong alliance between the workers and the banned political parties. This resonates with Hanky Sereo's argument that "when the banned political movement seemed to get off the boil, the labour movement, through the …SFTU took the banner and became the new face of the political struggle, until the late 90s to the new millennium when the labour organization's internal problems began to incapacitate it."[797]

In October 1993, the SFTU tabled a list of demands to an Obed Dlamini-led government popularly known as the 27 Demands. However, the demands were tabled at a time when the country was preparing for national elections. Consequently, the demands were not attended to for some time. The demands were tabled again in 1995 to a new government headed by Prince Mbilini Dlamini. The demands followed a door-to-door campaign[798] in March 1995 by the SFTU to identify burning issues with the aim of improving the standard of living for all workers across the country. The demands sought to address grievances of almost all sectors of society comprising trade union members, bus operators, police, vendors and orphans, vulnerable and old people.[799] The government's failure to address the workers' demands in the March 1995

[795] For a similar view see, Report by the Solidarity Center, Justice for all: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Swaziland, September 2006.

[796] However, political parties continued to operate, albeit underground.

[797] Sereo, "The Contribution of the People's United Democratic Movement…", p. 76.

[798] The campaign was dubbed *khukhulelangoco* meaning everyone is involved.

[799] Swazi Observer (thereafter, SO), "The Famous 27 Demands", 14 June 2018.

campaign led to militant protest actions. The SFTU organized a protest action leading to the stepping down of then Prime Minister Mbilini Dlamini.[800]

Whereas the demands sought to redress poor working and living conditions and low wages, there was a political salient aspect about them. The 27 Demands depicted that the SFTU was pursuing a political agenda.[801] Some of the demands mirrored the workers' denunciation of the 1973 Decree and called for the unbanning of political parties and the introduction of freedom of speech and association.[802] This was a clear challenge to the king's proclamation which banned political parties in 1973. By demanding the government to re-institute democratic structures the labour movement was challenging the state to replace the imposed non-party state *Tinkhundla* system with a more democratic system. Thulani Mngometulu justifies the political salient aspect about the 27 Demands by arguing that PUDEMO was behind these political demands. In his own words Mngometulu argues that "the 27 Demands were not necessarily the SFTU's brainchild. There was a lot of PUDEMO and the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) efforts in the 27 Demands. The demands were the brainchild of individuals like Vincent Ncongwane. Jan was only the mouthpiece."[803] Mngometulu further claims "PUDEMO used trade union structures to advance its course since the decree did not ban trade unions."[804] This resonates with Richard Levin's argument that PUDEMO at its initial formation took a resolution to build unions where none existed and strengthen them where they existed.[805] Whether or not PUDEMO used trade unions to champion its political agenda remains to be proven. What remains clear, however, is that workers, irrespective of their political affiliation, through the 27 Demands demonstrated a political dispensation. PUDEMO has been accused on many occasions of hijacking strikes by claiming it was behind workers' struggles. A case in point is that of

[800] TOS, "Prince Mbilini Era, 27 Demands in PM's Book", 8th February 2018.

[801] See for instance, TOS, "SFTU now have a political agenda", 11 November 1995.

[802] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland: *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 50.

[803] Interview with Thulani Mngometulu, Manzini, 8 June 2019.

[804] Interview with Thulani Mngometulu, Manzini, 8 June 2019; Bongani Masuku also shares the same sentiments, WhatsApp Interview with Bongani Masuku, South Africa, 17 June 2019.

[805] Levin, *When the Sleeping Grass Awakens*.

SWAYOCO. Contrary to the widely held view that SWAYOCO was formed by PUDEMO as its youth wing, Simon Mvubu claims "SWAYOCO was formed by concerned Swazi citizens to educate the youth on trade union and political rights as well as creating awareness among the youth about the Imbokodvo National Movement manifesto and strategies."[806] Although Mvubu concedes that within the SWAYOCO executive there were PUDEMO subscribing members he maintains that the youth organisation was not formed by PUDEMO. Mvubu claims that SWAYOCO was hijacked after the march from Mbabane to Manzini. He accuses the executive members who were card carrying members of PUDEMO of hijacking SWAYOCO and believes that is what eventually killed the youth organisation.[807]

Oral evidence suggests that other workers were against the political demands. Simon Mvubu testified that "some of us were against that approach. We wanted the SFTU to focus on the labour movement, automatically regime transition would occur. You see, that was our downfall. The seed of anti-political parties was planted in the 1964 and 1967 elections."[808] The SFL stated that it was worried by the labour movement's lack of transparency on political issues. The SFL's Secretary General said "[t]he problem is when a labour organisation goes all out and turns itself into a political party. It must be borne in mind that some members will not align with the organisation's political ideologies. Some members join solely because of labour reasons."[809] The problem would arise when the political ideologies and beliefs differ among workers within an organisation. In such cases, those members with a different ideology from that of the organisation will feel left out since their political aspirations will not be represented. Further, those members who joined solely for labour reasons might feel misplaced and more importantly feel their organisation would be wasting resources when tackling political issues. Some workers, however, strongly believe that labour and politics are intertwined. As a trade unionist argued in the mid-1990s, "it has become clear that labour issues are intertwined with political, social and economic set-ups in a given country. It is in this regard that Trade Unions the world over have

[806] Interview with Simon Mvubu, Bethany, 7 June 2019.

[807] Interview with Simon Mvubu, Bethany, 7 June 2019.

[808] Interview with Simon Mvubu, Bethany, 7 June 2019.

[809] TOS, "SFL is worried about transparency in unions with a political agenda", 14 November 1995.

found it difficult to divorce labour issues from politics."[810] In 1996 trade unionist, Jabulani Nxumalo argued that "trade unions and political issues are intertwined with human rights. One cannot exist without the other."[811] This proves that workers had different views about the labour movement's involvement in politics. This is a clear demonstration of the dynamics of labour which is neither monolithic nor homogenous but diverse.

Other demands sought to redress poor working and living conditions and low wages for workers. They included the recognition of May Day as a workers' holiday on the 1st of May in each year, the localization of jobs, the right for workers to strike, the introduction of a national minimum wage as well as the introduction of benefits such as pension, and all benefits available to other employees of the same enterprise for seasonal workers.[812] The workers also warned government not to increase taxes but to cut on its luxurious spending.[813] This proves that the 27 Demands were not only about political issues but also work related issues.

Through their demands, the workers were able to influence the direction of government policies. The government was forced to agree to a list of demands centered on redrafting of the out-dated 1963 labour legislation, the repeal of the 1973 Decree and an undertaking from the government to reinstitute democratic structures. In a strategy to put pressure on the government to agree to most its demands the SFTU announced another general strike in November 1995. This strategy, however, proved ineffective since the government instead of agreeing to the workers' demands applied delaying tactics. For instance, the government negotiation team met the union members and pledged substantial reforms by the New Year if the strike was cancelled. However, the government's failure to implement democratic reforms led to protest action by the labour movement.[814] The strike cost the country's economy millions of Emalangeni in lost production and damaged property. Despite that the repeal of the 1973 Decree and the reinstitution of

[810] TOS, "Are unions fighting for workers' rights", 10 November 1995.

[811] TOS, "Politics cannot be separated from trade unionism", 7 March 1996.

[812] SO, "The Famous 27 Demands", 14 June 2018.

[813] SO, "The Famous 27 Demands", 14 June 2018.

[814] TOS, "Swaziland Workers Strike for Democracy", 7 February 1996.

democratic structures were not achieved the strike popularised the SFTU both locally and internationally. Subsequently, the SFTU acknowledged the need to mobilize workers to call for democracy, arguing that reform could not take place in a repressive climate. The SFTU's Secretary General Jan Sithole argued that workers resolved that the *Tinkhundla* system should be dismantled when he stated that "workers have un-equivocally passed a vote of no confidence to the system of governance in the country."[815] Sithole further argued that the SFTU believed in popular participation and hoped that other pro-democracy groups will stand up and facilitate the democratisation of the kingdom.[816] Hitherto, the SFTU had deliberately avoided political issues, since the government only reluctantly allowed trade union activity as long as political issues remained outside their mandate.[817]

There are several reasons why the SFTU became popular during this period. Firstly, there was continuous repression by the *Tinkhundla* state and this repression was modelled by employers. Workers were regularly exposed to ill-treatment in the workplace. These are grievances which the SFTU was addressing on behalf of the workers. Secondly, the SFTU had begun addressing issues (such as May Day celebrations, localisation of jobs, converting the provident fund into a pension scheme to benefit the workers and constitutional multi-party democracy) which workers felt should have been addressed earlier by the federation. When these grievances were eventually addressed by the SFTU they were excitedly welcomed by the workers. Thirdly, the SFTU proved beyond reasonable doubt immediately after the split in 1992 that workers could still rely on the federation for improved wages and working and living conditions. Finally, through the support of international federations, the LO-Norway of Norway and LO-FTF of Denmark the SFTU started on an aggressive capacity building of membership in a bid to create a foundation for future leaders and to promote workers' rights, bargain workers into trade unions and build the federation going forward.[818]

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[815] TOS, "SFTU meets groups to discuss state reform", 11 November 1995.

[816] TOS, "SFTU meets groups to discuss state reform", 11 November 1995.

[817] See also, J. Salmond, "Swaziland: 1- Of Trade Unions and Transformation", *Southern Africa Report Archive*, Vol. 12, 3 (1997).

[818] See for instance, Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 53.

Although worker participation in the popular 27 Demands was very high there's no evidence showing the SNAT's participation as an organisation. It is clear, however, that individual teachers participated in solidarity with other workers since this was a national issue which still affected them as ordinary citizens. As a result, the opening of schools for the first term was disturbed because most teachers participated in the strike action. Although the SFTU was accused of failing to lobby SNAT for their participation on time the main reason for SNAT's inability to participate as an organisation was a lack of a legislative instrument that permitted the organisation to partake in sympathy strikes.[819] Muzi Mhlanga substantiates this argument when he argues that "SNAT was for a long time not affiliated to a federation. However, the union had a memorandum of understanding with both the SFTU and SFL."[820]

The campaign was followed by protest action in November 1995. Almost all sectors of society participated in the protest action because "organised labour, underground political parties and women, youth and church groups came together in unified, labour-led pro-democracy movement action."[821] The threat of yet another strike forced the Federation of Swaziland Employers (FSE) to caution the government that business confidence in Swaziland was declining due to the heavy losses during previous strikes. However, the government did not heed this warning; rather, parliament passed a new industrial relations act which banned mass action by workers, subjecting union leaders to 10 years imprisonment and or a 10,000 Emalangeni fine for causing labour unrest. Nearly 100, 000 workers responded with a nine day general strike in January 1996.[822] The labour movement raised familiar demands which included the repeal of the 1973 Decree, constitutional reforms and a commitment from government not to interfere in union meetings. The strike influence King Mswati III to set up a Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) to map out constitutional reforms although the committee was criticized since its members were handpicked by the king.[823] The strike disturbed most economic activity, and the

[819] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 53.

[820] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, 26 January, 2019.

[821] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, Celebrating 52 Years, p. 52.

[822] See also, Salmond, "Swaziland: 1- Of Trade Unions…".

[823] Amnesty International, "Swaziland: General Strike 1997", 13 February 1997.

state responded violently. Many activists and union leaders were arrested, tortured and beaten by the state security forces, and leading to the death of a young girl, Noxolo, that was killed by police during a demonstration at Khoza residence.[824] Electricity, water, food and fuel supplies were disturbed, schools were closed, and millions of Emalangeni were lost in production, trade and damage to property.[825]

The government's failure to make political and labour reforms led to another general strike when, in 1997, the country's major industries (sugar, forestry, citrus processing, and many others) were brought to a standstill for the entire month of February, costing the nation millions of Emalangeni. The strike which was a response to the state's failure to address the workers' demands occurred a year after a very widespread week-long strike in 1996 over similar demands. Subsequent to that earlier strike, King Mswati III initiated a constitutional reform process, apparently to respond to the widespread call for the lifting of the state of emergency in place since 1973 and denial of freedom of political association and assembly. However by the end of 1996 no substantial progress had been made in the area of constitutional reform and all political activity remained banned.[826]

Again in 1997, Swaziland witnessed another joint protest action when large factions of workers were involved in a mass stay away. The mass stay away started off as a teachers' strike in October 1997 to force government to increase their wages by 18%.[827] The teachers' strike forced government to indefinitely postpone the writing of external examinations.[828] The state was in serious trouble when on 13th October, 1997 the SFTU joined the teachers' strike in the spirit of solidarity with the teachers.[829] Public transport owners also supported the teachers' strike. Through their union, the Swaziland Commercial Amadoda Road Transportation (SCARTA), the

[824] TOS, "Stop harassing Noxolo's family, SFTU tells cops", 16 March 1996.

[825] See Salmond, "Swaziland: 1- Of Trade Unions…".

[826] Amnesty International, "Swaziland: General Strike 1997", 13 February 1997.

[827] TOS, "Teachers in boycott", 5 October 1997.

[828] TOS, "External Exams Postponed after threat to strike", 8 October 1997.

[829] TOS, "About 3,000 SFTU members agreed to join the teachers' strike action", 6 October 1997.

public transport owners ordered the Swazi government to give the teachers the 18% salary increment before Monday in order to stop the proposed strike action. The union went further to state that they will march to the Prime Minister to request him to give in to the teachers' demands.[830] Although the bus owners appeared to be in a solidarity strike with the teachers, they stood to lose a lot financially if the strike which supported by the SFTU went ahead.

However, not all unions in Swaziland supported the teachers' strike. There was confusion at SNACS since the union issued two contradicting statements about joining the teachers' strike. There were two factions within SNACS, one led by Absalom Dlamin and another by Elliot Mkhatshwa.[831] Dlamini's faction announced that the union would not join the teachers' strike while Mkhatshwa's faction announced that SNACS will partake in the strike.[832] Mkhatshwa said SNACS was fully behind the teachers' strike since the two unions had been in the struggle for a long time. Consequently, he felt there was an obligation for SNACS to join the strike in solidarity with the teachers.[833] The fact there were factions within SNACS demonstrates conflict within the labour union. It is very interesting to note that Mkhatshwa served in both executives. When the High Court found Mkhatshwa's faction illegal he assumed his presidential position in the Dlamini-led executive. There were also contradictions on SNACS' affiliation to the SFTU. Whereas S'phiwe Hlophe of the Mkhatshwa faction said the union was affiliated to the SFTU Absalom Dlamini denied that arguing that the union had stopped subscribing to the federation, thus constitutionally SNACS was no longer affiliated to the SFTU hence there was no need to join the strike.[834] This is a clear demonstration of the dynamics of labour which indicates that the Swazi labour movement was not a homogenous entity that thought and behaved uniformly. Rather, it shows behavior of a labour movement that was informed by different backgrounds and goals.

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[830] TOS, "Give teachers the 18% increment", 11 October 1997.

[831] Elliot Mkhatshwa was president in the new SNACS executive and vice-president in the old executive.

[832] TOS, "SNACS will not join the strike, says Dlamini", 11 October 1997.

[833] TOS, "SNACS will not join the strike, says Dlamini", 11 October 1997.

[834] TOS, "SNACS will not join the strike, says Dlamini", 11 October 1997.

In the new millennium as the country's fiscal challenges reached a climax, the labour movement struck back and fiercely protested. In 2007 workers were engaged in a general strike led by the SFTU, the SFL and the SNAT. These unions stagged two-hour full stoppages of public life every month until the state gave in to their demands which included ending the taxing of workers' benefits, introducing multi-party elections in 2008 and regime transition. The first two-day stoppage occurred on 25 July in Manzini and on 26 July in Mbabane with tens of thousands of workers demonstrating on the streets. The demonstrations constituted Swaziland's biggest civil movement for over a decade, since the last large-scale protests in the mid-1990s. The state responded by ordering the workers not to demonstrate, but rather lobby the parliament, since only parliament had the power to change the constitution to allow multi-party elections. On 2 August 2007, union representatives threatened further strike action if the government was not willing to listen to their demands. The unions further raised labour issues, adding to their political demands.[835] The strike attracted interest from political parties. The PUDEMO encouraged its members from the mainstream political party, SWAYOCO and the Women's League to fully participate in the strike. In a statement PUDEMO's Secretary General said "[h]aving looked into the demands, we were all convinced that these are genuine people's demands whether they are workers, unemployed and pensioners and we encourage them to fully support the protest action."[836] The NNLC's Women's League also pledged its support to strike action. Chairperson of the Women's League said NNLC members would be participating in the protest action. Nkosi further argued that some of their members were also affiliated to the three organisations the SFTU, SFL and SNAT, which were calling the strike.[837]

The 2007 workers' protests prompted a strong response from the state. In November 2008 the state signed into law the Suppression of Terrorism Act which worsened the situation of pro-democracy groups in the country. Despite that PUDEMO, SWAYOCO, and other political groups were proscribed as terrorist organizations other groups such as trade unions were not spared since the act did not clearly define the meaning of 'terrorist act' posing a persistent threat

[835] http://www.wikipedia, 2007 General Strike, 14 August, 2018.

[836] TOS, "PUDEMO members urged to join strike", 25 July 2007.

[837] TOS, "NNLC Women's League pledges its support", 25 July 2007.

to many civil society activities.[838] The ban targeted PUDEMO, SWAYOCO, *Umbane* and the South African based Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) and other political and pro-democracy groupings. "They were branded as enemies of peace, stability, security and national progress, whose sole aim was to plant seeds of division, fear and strife in the Swazi nation."[839] Making the announcement at Cabinet offices, Prime Minister Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini was accompanied by Attorney General Majahenkhaba Dlamini argued that "in exercise of powers vested in him, under and in virtue of Section 28 of the Suppression of Terrorism Act, 2008, and being satisfied that there is material to support a recommendation under this section, he had declared that each of the above named organisations had been declared specified entities."[840] This act "criminalized any person found to be abetting, aiding and sympathizing with sheltering and giving any logistical support to these organisations."[841] Despite this ban PUDEMO was not surprised by this act as they saw it coming from the Prime Minister. In fact the political party vowed to fight on.[842] The act despite that it was clearly against the freedom of speech and association provided for in the Swazi Constitution was not gazetted in parliament and thus had no legal basis.[843]

However, the act did not deter the workers from engaging in protest action to champion their demands. In 2008 for instance, the labour movement protested against the purchase of the King's Jet, undermining of the rule of law and harassment of judges by royal and government elites.[844] This demonstrates that the Swazi labour movement was determined to challenge the state and force it to agree to the workers' demands in spite of the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008 which also posed a danger to the labour movement.

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[838] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 23.

[839] TOS, "Barney's iron fist slammed", 17 November 2008.

[840] TOS, "Barney's iron fist slammed", 17 November 2008.

[841] TOS, "Barney's iron fist slammed", 17 November 2008.

[842] TOS, "Barney's iron fist slammed", 17 November 2008.

[843] TOS, "PM's ban on parties not gazetted!", 30 November 2008.

[844] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 73.

From 2009 to 2012 Swaziland witnessed a series of militant protests that were orchestrated by the labour movement. Feeding the series of protests were the country's "economic hardship that escalated into a fiscal crisis…, impacting negatively on Swazi society and economy."[845] The Swazi labour movement responded with a series of labour protests, which H.S. Simelane[846] argues they were not successful since they did not bring out the anticipated results. However, despite the fact that these strikes did not bring about the desired results, the resilience of the labour movement demonstrated that the government could not continue to ignore the demands of the workers. As H.S. Simelane argues, the financial crisis that Swaziland experienced resulted to the emergence of a social movement that launched a series of protests from the turn of 2011. Almost all sectors of the Swazi society, comprising pro-democracy groups and political activists, led by the labour movement came together to form a strong social movement fighting for economic justice.[847]

Between 2010 and 2012, the labour movement led by SNAT engaged in several strikes protesting against Circular No.1 of 2010 which gave Cabinet Ministers and their wives hefty pay-outs at the end of their term of office. The labour movement also protested against government lavish, irresponsible spending patterns which escalated the country's wage bill. This resonates with H.S. Simelane's argument that although the fiscal challenges were related to the global economic breakdown they were largely self-inflicted.[848] Following on the advice of International Monetory Fund (IMF) to reduce the wage bill, the Swazi Government proposed salary cuts by 10% for civil servants despite the 30% salary increments it had awarded to legislators.[849] This sparked fierce protetsts from the labour movement which resisted the proposed salary cuts.

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[845] H.S. Simelane, "Fiscal Crisis, Social Protest and State Violence in Swaziland, 2009-2012" *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 41, 2 (2016), p. 209.

[846] Simelane, "Fiscal Crisis…", pp. 209-210.

[847] Simelane, "Fiscal Crisis…", p. 216.

[848] Simelane, "Fiscal Crisis…", p. 227.

[849] Interview with, Nhlanhla Dzingindzawo, Ntondozi, 2 February 2019. See also, TOS, "Cabinet must resign", 5 April 2012; Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2012.

In June 2012 the Swazi labour movement engaged in a protracted protest which came to be popularly known as *waya-waya* loosely translated to mean 'indefinite'. Feeding the strike in 2012 was the worsening economic situation for the workers as the inflation rate rose above 9%. The Swazi Government made it clear that it could not afford to raise civil servants' salaries despite that it awarded a 30% pay increase to Members of Parliament and other legislators. The majority of Swazis lived in poverty since many lived on the equivalent of two dollars per day while Members of Parliament made an equivalent of 2,400 dollars per month, with many added benefits.[850] The labour movement, led by SNAT challenged the government and engaged in strike action to improve their economic condition. In June 2012, the SNAT resolved to contravene a court decision, after the Industrial Court had denied teachers the right to engage in strike action[851] and instead went on an open-ended strike over demands for a 4.5% salary increase.[852] In the build-up to the indefinite strike action SNAT sought to follow procedure and exhaust all channels before engaging in protest action. Fom 13 to 14 June SNAT held a two-day plebiscite in which over 6,000 teachers participated to decide whether or not they should engage in strike action. At least 4,506 teachers voted in the strike ballot, with 4,436 supporting strike action while only 70 opposed it. The strike went ahead.[853] By asking the teachers to vote for the strike the union followed all procedures before engaging in protest action. However, the government resorted to dirty tactics and declared that the strike was illegal. The government followed this up by taking the union to court after the teachers started the strike that saw clashes between police and protesters. The government filed an urgent application seeking an order to stop the strike arguing that it was illegal since it contravened the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act. According to Judge Dumisani Mazibuko, SNAT failed to serve the government with a notice. Unsurprisingly, the Industrial Court ruled in favour of the government and issued an order that stopped the teachers'strike at 12:07am. This claim was, however, disputed by SNAT's lawyer Mandla Mkhwanazi who argued that the strike was lawful since the government

[850] Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

[851] TOS, "Teachers' strike halted", 20 June 2012; TOS, "Industrial Court stops teachers' strike", 20 June 2012.

[852] TOS, "Defiant teachers vow to strike…*waya waya*!", 22 June 2012.

[853] SO, "Teachers vote for an indefinite strike today", 14 June 2012; TOS, "Mass protest on Wednesday", 16 June 2012; see also Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

was served with a notice in early June 2012 informing it of the intended strike action.[854] The fact that the strike was stopped at the eleventh hour shows that the government used dirty tactics. SNAT conducted ballots and used the results to serve government with a notice informing it of the intended strike action. In essence, the government's claim that SNAT did not serve it with a notice is unconvincing. The strike was stopped because the government felt threatened by the teachers'strike, not because it was illegal.

The teachers defied the court rulling the teachers' strike went ahead. In a last ditch effort to stop the teachers' union going on strike indefinitely, the Government Negotiating Team (GNT) called the SNAT National Executive Committee (NEC) for a meeting. In this meeting, the union representatives, led by the SNAT President Sibongile Mazibuko, were told that the planned strike action was illegal since the union had not followed all procedures. In response, the union leaders told the GNT, which was led by the Education Minister, that it was inappropriate to call them for a meeting since other civil servants' unions were not present.[855] This was one of the state's strategies of divide and rule. By inviting only SNAT and exclude other civil unions' leaders the state sought to divide the bargaining strength of the country's labour movement. Following a two-day strike the GNT called the SNAT executive members to a meeting. The government insisted it could not afford to increase teachers' salaries, and the GNT sought to discourage teachers from striking by claiming the planned strike action was illegal. Sibongile Mazibuko countered this claim when she argued that if the government could afford to lose a reported 18 million dollars per month to corruption and increase its cabinet salaries by 30%, it definitely could afford to pay what the teachers were demanding.[856] This marked a deadlock in the negotiations between the GNT and SNAT executive.

[854] TOS, "Teachers' strike halted", 20 June 2012; TOS, "Industrial Court stops teachers' strike", 20 June 2012.

[855] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, Mbabane, 7 February, 2019; Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

[856] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, Mbabane, 7 February, 2019; see also Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

After negotiations between the GNT and SNAT executive hit a deadlock, on 21 June 2012 the teachers' union began an open ended strike in which close to 6,000 members participated.[857] The National Association of Public Servants and Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU) members soon joined the strike, although 70% of NAPSAWU's members continued working. The nurses of the Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union (SDNU) also participated in the strike.[858] On 28 June, members of the Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers Union joined the strike. Many students in urban areas deserted the teacher-less schools and joined the strike. The government responded to the strike by cutting the striking teachers' July salaries by one third. This was one of the divisive strategies by the government which were aimed at weakening and pacifying the labour movement. The salary cuts, however, did not deter the labour movement from continuing with the strike.

Civil servants in Swaziland had not had a pay increase since 2010 as the government struggled to finance its massive public wage bill, and protests grew each year. At the root of the unrest was Cabinet's lavish spending and lifestyle while 60% Swazis survived on less than a dollar per day, and the state's refusal to implement democratic reforms.[859] Deceived by the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) annual receipts which in some years rose to above 75 per cent of the country's revenue, the Swazi Government ignored repeated warnings from the IMF to reduce its wage bill and stop its over dependency on SACU support and diversify the economy. Instead, the government learned fiscal indiscipline and ignored economic development which would have diversified the economy and ultimately improved the working and living conditions and wages of the workers and general Swazi populace.[860] Faced with serious fiscal challenges, the Swazi Government attempted to follow the recommendations of the IMF and proposed 10 per cent salary cuts for civil servants. However, the labour movement resisted the proposed reforms and instead showed the government where the money was. To the labour movement the government's continued fiscal indiscipline and refusal to accept and effect the suggetsted

[857] TOS, "Teachers to stage sit in…and then take to the streets in Thursday", 19 June 2012.

[858] TOS, "NAPSAWU calls for mass strike", 21 June 2012.

[859] Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

[860] See for instance, Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 17.

reforms was enough proof that the economic situation was good it was only that they did not want to increase the salaries for the civil servants. Consequently, the labour movement demanded the resignation of Cabinet from office for failing to govern the country citing the excalating rate of corruption within the government which allegedly amounted to 80 millions of Emalangeni per month.[861]

The resilience of the labour movement was evident from the onset. As early as April 2012 the labour movement made it clear it would not accept salary cuts and was very optimistic that civil servants' salaries will be increased. Sibongile Mazibuko of SNAT detailed that "we shall not surrender. We would rather die. The government won't cut our salaries, instead our salaries will be increased."[862]

Despite that the teachers failed to get the 4.5 per cent salary increase and instead got salary cuts the strike had some successes. Firstly, the strike enjoyed the support of a majority of the Swazi population. In particular, the salary cuts and mass firing of teachers backfired on the government and made most Swazis to sympathise with and support the teachers and argued that they should be reinstated and given the salary increment. Secondly, strike influenced the king to summon a three-day *Sibaya* [863] meeting which commenced on 7 August.[864] Following popular uproar at the meeting over the dismissal of teachers, the king ordered that teachers be reinstated during the last week of August. Significantly, during this peoples' parliament, Swazis openly demanded the firing of the entire cabinet for its failure in handling the teacher strike.[865] Although, the teachers were not granted the pay rise they had demanded the strike was successful in getting the support of the Swazi people and getting the fired teachers to be reinstated.

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[861] TOS, "Cabinet must resign – SNAT", 5 April 2012.

[862] TOS, "Cabinet must resign – SNAT", 5 April 2012.

[863] Sibaya is a traditional people's parliament where Swazis convene to discuss matters of national importance upon being called by the King.

[864] SO, "King Commissions Sibaya", 7 August 2012; SO, "Thousands gather at Ludzidzini for Sibaya", 7 August 2012.

[865] SO, "Fire Cabinet, says Sibaya", 9 August 2012; TOS, 9 August 2012.

One of the popular songs during the strike was directed to the members of the royal family, particularly princes and princesses who were criticised for thinking that the country belonged to them yet the strikers believed that the country also belonged to their forefathers. The song goes thus *"Swaziland$^{\times 2}$ yizwe lomkhulu hhayi bantfwabenkhosi…Swaziland$^{\times 2}$ yizwe lobaba hhayi boBarnabas"* meaning "Swaziland is a country of our forefathers not members of royal family nor Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini". The Swazi labour movement used every weapon to fight for their rights including the importation of Swazi culure by singing political songs to challenge their plight at the hands of an unsympathetic government. In Swazi culture it is allowed to vent frustration about anything and to anyone, including the king, using songs, music and dance. This resonates with Teresa Debly's argument that pro-democracy groups used creative culture and tradition to challenge the legitimacy of the *Tinkhundla* system. Teresa shows "how political dissidents have used songs and music…to 're-claim' culture and tradition in order to keep the struggle for political reform alive."[866]

According to Muzi Mhlanga, the song was also directed at former Prime Minister Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini. Mhlanga argues that "many workers directed this song to Barnabas. You can see that in many video clips. He was a target of many workers as they saw him as the source of their problems."[867] As Prime Minister, Barnabas was viewed by many workers as the source of their problems. His cabinet was unpopular with the workers since it did not increase salaries for them but was mostly viewed as selfish and greedy at the expense of the workers. Circular No.1 of 2010 is testimony to this. According to this circular, the legislators were entitled to exorbitant exit packages. For instance, the Prime Minister was to be paid E1 483 360, the Deputy Prime Minister was to be paid E1 333 907, each minister E1 271 304, Members of Parliament E400 236.[868] While the legislators prepared these hefty perks for themselves the country was faced with serious fiscal challenges. In 2012 the Swazi Government made it clear again that it could not afford to raise civil servants' salaries despite the 30% pay increase awarded to members of

[866] T. Debly, "Culutre and resistance in Swaziland", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 32, 3 (2014).

[867] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[868] TOS, "Circular No. 1 Put on Ice", 18 September, 2013.

parliament and other legislators in that same year.[869] This shaped the development and character of the Swazi labour which then stepped up it's course and sought to join the struggle for democratisation in the kingdom.

Conclusion

The chapter has attempted to critically reflect on the Swazi labour movement's experiences and its responses to the challenges it faced from independence to 2014. The chapter has discussed the emergence of a centralized non-party *Tinkhundla* state ending the multi-party democracy that was introduced on the eve of independence. The *Tinkhundla* system tended to view the labour movement as a threat to its hegemony since even though trade unions were repressed alongside political parties the labour movement struck back and fought for workers' rights and challenged the non-party state. As the cost of living became unbearable in the 1990s workers, through federations and trade unions, responded with militant protest actions. Although the financial crises should be seen within the broader framework of global economic meltdown, largely the Swazi Government was responsible. The labour movement in Swaziland, like most of its counterparts elsewhere in Africa, has provided a constant source of discomfort for the *Tinkhundla* regime since independence as it represents an independent power base and holds an unrivalled capacity for mobilisation of Swazi civil society. As Freund argues, nearly all African governments have been uncomfortable with strong, radical, independent labour movements.[870] The Swazi labour movement has demonstrated its willingness to defend the rights of workers and confronted issues affecting the general members of the Swazi populace through periodic mass action, despite continuing state attacks. The state's response has been uncompromising in some instances torturing, injuring, arresting, victimizing and killing protesters and trade unionists. However, the labour movement has held on and boasts of a history that is coated with both victories and setbacks. In the final analysis, the Swazi labour movement emerged as a significant opponent of the non-party state that has characterized much of post-colonial Swaziland. The labour movement was central to the widespread challenges to the authoritarian state in much of post-independence Swaziland.

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[869] TOS, "Strike Against Swazi Fat Cats", 25 January, 2012.

[870] B. Freund, *The African Worker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 106-107.

CHAPTER 8

ALLIANCE OR CONFLICT? LABOUR, POLITICAL PARTIES, THE STATE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN POST-COLONIAL SWAZILAND, 1969 – 2014

Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine the relationship between labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland. It focuses on the relationship of the labour movement with political parties and its contribution to the struggle for a democratic Swaziland. The chapter argues that Swazi labour has played a significant role of addressing wider societal political issues to do with the repressive and undemocratic atmosphere of the traditional monarchic system and non-party state that has characterised much of post-colonial Swaziland. However, despite its relationship with political parties, the labour movement has sometimes fought to retain its autonomy.

In discussing the trajectory of the labour movement in post-colonial Swaziland the chapter analyses, with notable peculiarities and similarities with cases in Southern Africa and elsewhere in the continent and the world. In particular, the chapter analyses the role and contribution of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) and the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) and other labour unions to the contemporary struggles for democracy in post-colonial Swaziland.

Labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Africa

African trade unions have a long tradition with politics dating to the anti-colonial movements through to contemporary struggles for democracy.[871] Herbert Jauch appropriately observes that the alliance between labour and politics in parts of Southern Africa is still on-going today.[872]

[871] For a similar view, see for instance, E. Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties in Africa: New Alliances, Strategies and Partnerships" *Briefing Papers*, No.3 (2007), p. 1.

[872] H. Jauch, "Trade Unions in Southern Africa", *A Paper Presented to 'Future for Southern Africa'*, Namibia, September 2003.

Consequently, the history of trade unions cannot be studied holistically without their association with national politics. Trade unions have proven to be not only social and economic, but they have also demonstrated political powers. In Africa as elsewhere, labour has played a critical role in the popular struggles against colonialism, neo-liberal economic reforms as well as leading pro-democracy movements across Africa.[873]

In the post-colonial period, African labour movements have effectively played different, non-uniform roles. In some instances, African labour has played a subordinate role to the national liberation movement in the post-colonial period, often reduced to performing a 'conveyor belt' function of the ruling party.[874] This is what Edward Webster calls the 'the traditional client model' where labour remains a client of the ruling party. Such cases are seen in Egypt and Senegal.[875] In many other instances, African labour has provided a constant source of discomfort for incumbent regimes as they represent an independent power base and hold an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in African civil society. In Zambia and Zimbabwe for instance, labour movements were responsible for spearheading the formation of opposition parties which eventually dethroned the incumbent regimes.[876] Webster calls this relationship 'divorce' because the labour movement pulls out from the alliance with the ruling party and forms its own party as an opposition. He mentions that sometimes this move fails to take off as it happened in the case of Nigeria or after forming a political party labour unions take a back seat as it happened in the case of Zambia and Zimbabwe.[877]

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[873] A. Beresford and H. Cross (eds.), "The Politics of Globalised Labour in Africa", *Journal of Critical African Studies*, Vol. 7, 1(2015), p. 1.

[874] See for instance, J. Herbert, "Serving Workers or Serving the Party? Trade Unions and Politics in Namibia" In: B. Beckman, S. Buhlungu, and L. Sachikonye (eds.), *Trade Unions and Party Politics: Labour Movements in Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), pp. 167-190; B. Raftopoulos and L. Sachikonye, *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980-2000* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2001).

[875] E. Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties in Africa: New Alliances, Strategies and Partnerships" *Briefing Papers*, No.3 (2007).

[876] See for instance, M. Larmer, "'The Hour Has Come at the Pit': Mineworkers' Union of Zambia and the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, 1982-1991" *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, 2 (2006), pp. 293-312.

[877] Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties…".

Budeli argues that trade unions engaged in politics as their members realised that their right to freedom of association could not be achieved under colonial rule. Hence, they contributed to the struggle for independence and even played a critical role in this struggle.[878] This engagement in politics was also visible in the post-colonial period. The aim of this chapter is not to reiterate the role of trade unions in the anti-colonial struggles; rather it seeks to assess the role and contribution of labour in pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland.

Bjorn Beckman and Sakhela Buhlungu reflect on the role of trade unions in African and South African politics from the colonial period.[879] Josephine Milbrun attempts to distinguish the roles of trade unions and federations. Milbrun argues that the main concern of individual unions is improving working conditions and providing services to their members, while federations tend to be more involved in politics although neither group has dedicated itself exclusively to a specific area.[880] Milbrun's argument although useful treats trade unions and federations as homogenous entities. Hence her argument does not apply to trade unions in Swaziland. Trade unions in Swaziland have a long tradition of political engagement dating to anti-colonial struggles through to present day struggles for democracy long before federations were formed. Further, it is the same trade unions that form federations so the objectives remain the same even when they are affiliating to a federation. The only difference is the bargaining strength since a federation is formed by several trade unions.

Contrary to Berg and Butler's argument that trade unions did not play any meaningful political role in colonial and independent Africa[881] the chapter seeks to demonstrate that Swazi trade unions have always been deeply involved in politics. According to Beckman and Sachikonye, a

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[878] M. Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa: The South African Experience", (Inaugural Lecture, Department of Mercantile, Law College of Law, University of South Africa, 26 July 2012), pp. 5-6.

[879] S. Buhlungu (Ed.), "Trade Unions and the Politics of National Liberation in Africa: An Appraisal" in: M. Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa: The South African Experience", Inaugural Lecture, Department of Mercantile, Law College of Law, University of South Africa, 26 July 2012, p. 2.

[880] Buhlungu (Ed.), "Trade Unions and the Politics…", p. 2.

[881] E. Berg and J. Butler, "Trade Unions" in: J.S. Coleman and C.G. Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964). See also I. Davies, *African Trade Unions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 11-12.

strong tradition of close collaboration between trade unions and political parties has always existed in Africa as it has elsewhere in the world.[882] Budeli demonstrates this close union-party collaboration by arguing that trade unions were allied to labour, liberal and democratic parties in Western capitalist countries in as much as they were affiliated to the single party in communist and socialist countries.[883]

In most cases, Budeli further argues, political parties were used to express the political objectives of trade unions and sometimes financed them, or vice versa. In the same vein, trade unions have influenced politics and the reverse. Consequently, trade unions have wavered between 'autonomy' and 'political affiliation' leading to some scholars calling for unions' 'disengagement from party politics' in order to protect or preserve their autonomy.[884] However, the union-party relations have not always been smooth. While there has been proven harmony between the two there has also been well documented conflicts between them. This has resulted to a dilemma for trade unions as the rank and file members argue on whether to form an alliance with political parties or retain their complete autonomy.

Budeli further argues that African leaders designed strategies to consolidate their power and prevent unions from turning against their own regimes since they were aware of the threat posed by labour to the newly independent African states. Consequently, most states adopted the 'divide and rule' strategy. Amongst other things, this required recruiting from unions their strong members or subjecting trade unions to their government. "The governments of the newly-independent African states were unwilling to tolerate the existence of autonomous institutions that could later challenge their authority and provide an alternative supply of political leaders."[885] In most parts of Southern Africa following the establishment of military regimes and single party states immediately after independence, opposition parties were banned while existing trade

[882] B. Beckman and L. Sachikonye, "Introduction: Trade unions and party politics in Africa" in Beckman, Buhlungu and Sachikonye (Eds.), *Trade Unions and Party Politics: Labour [M]ovements in Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), p.1.

[883] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa …".

[884] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…".

[885] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…".

unions were either banned or repressed since they posed a threat to the incumbent regimes. However, despite their repression, trade unions remained active and provided a source of discomfort to the incumbent regimes and became the only opposition to government.

Mpfariseni Budeli argues that trade unions collaborated with human rights organisations in their struggle against one party or military regimes and their call for democracy and respect for human rights. In many countries, trade unions became political actors for democratic change."[886] Similarly, the Swazi labour movement collaborated with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) committees, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) and other international organisations in their struggle for democracy and respect for human rights in Swaziland.

Edward Webster, writing on union-party relations in post-colonial Africa argues that labour has and continues to play a critical role in the struggle for democracy in Africa. To Webster, trade unions have been very instrumental in creating a democratic order in Africa. He insists, "vibrant militant independent trade unions are the most bulwark against authoritarianism."[887] Webster further argues that the relationship between trade unions and political parties was not always good. For instance, he asserts that sometimes there is unhappy marriage between unions and parties where the labour movement has a hostile relationship with the ruling party. In the case of South Africa unions are not directly represented in parliament whereas in Uganda unions elect Members of Parliament (MPs) although they don't report to the unions. In cases such as Ghana and South Africa, Webster argues, the labour movement withdraws from party politics.[888] In the same vein, the relationship between political parties and labour unions was sometimes conflicting.

[886] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…", p. 8.

[887] Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties…".

[888] Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties…".

Even though the primary purpose of a trade union according to Rosaria Burchielli, is to advocate for, and protect the interests of exploited workers using collective action,[889] Helen Bradford's study on the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) clearly demonstrates that the role of a trade union sometimes goes beyond work related issues to political issues. Bradford shows that workers also have aspirations about the wider societal issues, particularly politics.[890] Similarly, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the Swazi labour movement had aspirations about politics and played a critical role in the struggle for democracy in the country.

Jon Kraus argues that the African labour movement overcome the barriers of authoritarian rule and repression to champion demands for workers' rights and democratic political life. Kraus argues that although trade unions had done this irregularly in individual African countries from the 1960s to the 1980s they never had been as effective as they had done so in such numbers, in so many African countries in the contemporary period leading to the birth or the rebirth of democracy in public life.[891] Kraus's study is very useful to the chapter since it also discusses the role of trade union movements in democratization in post-colonial Swaziland.

Gretchen Bauer argues that in the 1980s and 1990s, the African labour movement re-emerged as a significant social force as many African countries underwent economic and political reforms. In Zambia, Ghana, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Nigeria, and South Africa, trade unions played a prominent role in the struggle for democratisation. In a majority of cases the work of the labour movement played a significant role on regime transitions in Africa towards multi-party democracy. Bauer examines the role of the labour movement during the first decades of post-independence Namibia, focusing on the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) and its affiliated unions. He argues that unlike other countries in Southern Africa, in post-independent Namibia the labour movement showed slight signs of challenging an authoritarian government

[889] R. Burchielli, "The Purpose of Trade Union Values: An Analysis of the ACTU Statement of Values", *Journal of Business Ethics,* Vol. 68, 2 (2006), p.137.

[890] H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1942-1930* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987).

[891] J. Kraus (ed.), "Trade Unions and the Coming of Democracy in Africa", © Jon Kraus, 2007.

led by the ruling South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) party.[892] This chapter seeks to demonstrate that the Swazi labour movement has provided a constant source of discomfort for the authoritarian non-party *Tinkhundla* state by demanding democracy in the kingdom.

Emmanuel Akwetey and Jon Kraus argue that in the years between 1989 and 1991 the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) played a prominent role in Zambian politics and its advocacy for the democratization of Zambia politics led to the defeat of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) at the multiparty elections of October 1991. Hitherto, UNIP's dominance had been so effectively unchallenged. However, all this changed when active trade union support for the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) led to Frederick Chiluba's electoral victory in October 1991, bringing to an end the authoritarian party-state regime.[893] Although the Swazi labour movement has constantly challenged authoritarian rule in the kingdom, it has yet to test the success experienced by the Zambian labour movement.

Richard Saunders on *Trade Union Struggles for Autonomy and Democracy in Zimbabwe* assesses the grounds on which labour movement's struggles for autonomy and democratization have occurred. He focuses on the straining relations between the labour movement and the state in its different phases; colonial, nationalist, neoliberal, and populist-authoritarian. In particular, Saunders traces the weaknesses and strengths of the labour movement as it challenged the state. He then explores how the labour movement survived in a repressive environment and its role in calling for a more democratic state.[894] Similarly, the chapter seeks to explore how the Swazi labour movement has survived the repressive atmosphere of the authoritarian non-party state as it called for multi-party democracy in Swaziland.

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[892] G. Bauer, "Nothing to Lose but Their Subordination to the State"? Trade Unions in Namibia Fifteen Years after Independence" in: J. Kraus (ed.), "Trade Unions and the Coming of Democracy in Africa" 2007.

[893] E. Akwetey and J. Kraus, "Trade Unions, Development, and Democratization in Zambia: The Continuing Struggle" in: J. Kraus (ed.), "Trade Unions and the Coming of Democracy in Africa", © Jon Kraus, 2007.

[894] R. Saunders, "Trade Union Struggles for Autonomy and Democracy in Zimbabwe" in: J. Kraus (ed.), "Trade Unions and the Coming of Democracy in Africa", © Jon Kraus, 2007.

Geoffrey Bergen contends that although trade unions in Senegal have undoubtedly been key agents of political change, by and large, they have been ineffective since their bargaining strength was weakened by internal divisions and disputes. Despite the long and proud history of labour militancy in Senegal, dating to the famous railway workers' strike of 1947 - 1948, by the 1980s, Senegal's labour force had been successfully weakened into a number of union organizations more concerned with battles for supremacy among themselves. In spite of this, from the 1980s to the 1990s, Senegalese trade unions constantly led the struggle for political change in Senegal.[895] The chapter also seeks to demonstrate that although there was collaboration between labour and politics at times there was conflict between the two in Swaziland.

Usman A. Tar examines the role of the Nigerian labour movement in the struggles for democracy in Nigeria. He shows that the Nigerian labour movement played a prominent role in socio-economic and pro-democracy struggles in the country. Tar argues that the state played a significant role in weakening and pacifying the labour movement by interfering in the affairs of these organisations. In some instances, "the state invented repressive laws to impose 'order'. The Nigerian labour movement [has struck back and] demonstrated both organisational strength and weakness, whilst also forging difficult alliances in confronting a common enemy, the state."[896] Similarly, the Swazi labour movement has endured numerous attempts by the state to weaken and pacify it.

Selamile Dlamini, writing on political parties and the support for democracy in Swaziland argues that there is enough support for the transition to democracy despite the atmosphere of repression that has characterised much of post-colonial Swaziland. She adds that fear emanates from the arrests of trade union leaders, labour activists, human rights advocates, critics of the constitution, and other persons who have voiced dissent within Swaziland. However, despite this fear there

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[895] G. Bergen "Labo[u]r, Democracy, and Development in Senegal" in: J. Kraus (ed.), "Trade Unions and the Coming of Democracy in Africa", © Jon Kraus, 2007.

[896] U.A. Tar, "Organised labour and democratic struggles in Nigeria", *Information, Society and Justice*, Vol.2, 2, (2009), pp. 165-181.

still exist progressive parties that are still campaigning for democracy.[897] Similarly, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that the Swazi labour movement has contributed to the struggle for democracy in Swaziland despite the atmosphere of repression that has characterised post-colonial Swaziland.

Bongani Masuku and Peter Limb, writing on the struggle for political freedom and democracy in Swaziland argue that state repression by the anti-democratic state has led to protests. They argue that the use of repression is the main reason the kingdom remains the only country in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) that does not have multi-party democracy elections. Attempts to introduce democratic reforms by pro-democracy groups have turned the country into a military state as force has been used to see off the labour movement.[898] In the same vein Bhekumusa Dlamini observes that Swaziland has remained undemocratic despite the wave of democratisation that has swept the African continent and the SADC region at large. He argues that economic and political powers have helped the Swazi monarchy to hold its grip on political power without giving any space to political parties.[899] Whereas both studies are useful to the chapter, their focus is not on the role of the labour movement in the struggle for democracy in Swaziland.

The above literature is a clear indication that labour movements in the Southern Africa, as elsewhere in the continent and the rest of the world, are not a homogenous entity and vary greatly in terms of design and the context of their challenges. For instance, most trade unions changed their roles in post-independence Africa whereas in post-colonial Swaziland, as well as post-independence Zimbabwe, trade union roles have remained the same as conflicts between the labour movement and the state intensified.

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[897] S. Dlamini, "Political Parties Cause Divisions: Exploring Support for Democracy in Swaziland", *Centre on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law*, CDDRL Stanford, 11 May 2015.

[898] B. Masuku and P. Limb, "Swaziland: The Struggle for Political Freedom and Democracy" *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 43, 149 (2016), pp. 518-527.

[899] B. Dlamini, "Democratisation in Swaziland", MA Thesis, University of Bergen, 2017.

Labour, the state and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland

The origins of the relationship between labour and politics in Swaziland can be traced back to the struggle for national independence. In the early 1960s a number of political parties were formed in Swaziland. Each of these political parties aimed to draw support from the working class and defeat the Swazi traditional system and then govern the country. Thus, it appears from the outset, that the alliance between labour and political parties was inevitable. The attainment of independence gave hope to Swazi labour that their poor working and living conditions as well as low wages will improve. There was a new belief that the exploitation and ill-treatment as well as racial abuse that Swazi workers received at the hands of colonial companies would end at independence.

The alliance between labour and politics which started in the colonial period continued through to the post-colonial period. This does not mean, however, that during this period there was no conflict between labour and pro-democracy politics. As Edward Webster argues the relationship between trade unions and political parties was not always good.[900] Whereas during the colonial period (particularly the early 1960s) the alliance between labour and politics was largely influenced by the growing momentum and hype around independence, in the post-colonial period the relationship between labour and politics has been largely influenced by pro-democracy politics. In post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, particularly during the 1970s, as non-party states, one party states and military regimes were established, many political parties formed strong alliances with political parties. Similarly, Swazi labour during this period became more aligned with political parties as the alliance between the two became stronger. It is important to note, however, that the manner in which Swazi labour formed alliances with political parties is different from the manner in which labour aligned with political parties in Southern Africa and elsewhere in the continent. In Zambia and Zimbabwe for instance, labour movements 'divorced' from the alliance with the ruling party and formed its own party as an opposition. In Egypt and Senegal for instance, the alliance between labour and politics was that of 'the traditional client model' where labour remains a subordinate and or client of the ruling party.[901] None of these occurred in Swaziland since the labour movement neither divorced from the ruling party to form

[900] Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties…".

[901] Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties…".

an opposition party nor was it a subordinate of the ruling party. The Swazi labour movement, although it has formed alliances with political parties, has always retained its autonomy.

The issue of labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland has been a complex one, since it has been both collaborative and conflicting. Thus, the subject on Swaziland is an illuminating case of the African experience with labour and politics, particularly because the Swazi labour movement became the most vocal opposition since the banning of political parties in 1973. Further, post-colonial Swaziland remains the only surviving kingdom under an absolute monarchy in Southern Africa. Thus, Swazi labour has provided a constant source of discomfort for the *Tinkhundla* regime as it represents an independent power base and hold an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in Swazi civil society.

In the absence of political parties, the labour movement led the call for political reform from within. The key players who have been instrumental in the workers' struggle for democracy in post-colonial Swaziland were the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL), the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), the Swaziland National Association of Civil Servants (SNACS), the Swaziland Nursing Association (SNA) and recently the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA). The influence of these key players in addressing the interest and aspirations of the Swazi labour movement during this period is recognised. These players have often acted jointly in asserting collective political rights that have had an effect on the rights of workers.

The ending of democracy which had just been introduced at independence strengthened ties between labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland. The atmosphere of democracy was destroyed in April 1973 when the Independence Constitution was 'scrapped off' and replaced with the 1973 King's Proclamation. This proclamation not only suspended the Westminster Constitution but also vested all legislative, executive and judicial powers in the king thus elevating him to a status above the constitution. Further, the proclamation banned all democratic civil and political freedoms of assembly, association and expression, thus ending the embryonic democracy in the country.[902] This untimely death of embryonic democracy in the

[902] Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12 April 1973.

country ended multi-party democracy in Swaziland. Similarly, the banning of political parties in 1972 by the United National Independence Party (UNIP) government marked the death of multi-party democracy in Zambia. On 13th December, 1972 President Kenneth Kaunda signed a Presidential Order which turned Zambia into a one-party state without consulting the electorate or their representatives in parliament. The opposition party, the African National Congress (ANC), was automatically demolished.[903] Differences can also be drawn between the Swazi and Zambian situations. First, in Swaziland the traditional aristocracy completely outplayed and kicked out the politicians from the political game while in Zambia the government forced and tricked the opposition into agreeing to the idea of one-party. Second, in Swaziland the monarchy replaced multi-party democracy with a traditional system that was rooted in monarchical dictatorship, yet in Zambia the political leadership continued with a 'doctored constitutional' rule which slowly turned into dictatorship.[904]

It was against this background and atmosphere of a one-party state that the alliance between labour and pro-democracy politics in Swaziland was strengthened. Trade unions, although not banned through the king's proclamation, were closely monitored and if necessary were to be banned if they refused to toe the line. The October 1977 teachers' strike clearly demonstrates the strong alliance between Swazi labour and pro-democracy politics. This strike which was followed by a mass students uprising countrywide was primarily based on appalling working conditions and poor wages but was also politically inclined. After all efforts by the teachers to have their salaries reviewed and working conditions improved failed, the teachers decided to engage in protest action in order to have their grievances addressed. This strike was soon followed by a students' strike in which there were reports of students tearing the national flag, singing political songs and stoning government vehicles. The teachers' union was subsequently banned. The fact that political songs were sung during the strike is a clear indication that the strike had moved beyond addressing bread and butter issues to addressing wider national political issues. This resonates with Helen Bradford's study on the ICU which clearly demonstrates that the role of a trade union sometimes goes beyond work related issues to address

[903] Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…", p. 90.

[904] For a similar view see also, Mutonga, "Democratisation in the SADC Region…", p. 91.

political issues. Bradford's study demonstrates that workers also have aspirations about the wider national issues, particularly politics.[905] This is also indicative of the fact that there was collaboration between labour and politics. This demonstrates also that in Swaziland as elsewhere in Africa, labour has played a critical role in the popular struggles for democracy.

In the 1980s, however, the banned Union of Teachers' re-emerged as the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT). It was no longer called a union but an association, the SNAT.[906] However, this was just a name change; the objectives were still those of the union. This demonstrates that the teachers were able to strike back at government for banning their organisation.

This was followed by the revival of the civil servants' union. Although, Ray Russon argues that in a way this was the re-emergence of political groupings although under disguise, this was labour reorganising itself to champion workers' demands for improved working and living conditions and wages, better. During this period political parties such as the Peoples United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) were also formed. Although some members of the PUDEMO were workers, the workers' agency should not be clouded by a political party. In the 1908s there was an attempt by workers which was clearly motivated by democratic ideals to register another national body for unions, the Swaziland Congress of Trade Unions (SWACOTU). The formation of SWACOTU was, however, averted by the Labour Department arguing that it was politically inspired.[907] From another perspective, the formation of SWACOTU suggests conflict between the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) and PUDEMO during this period. The emergence of SWACOTU is attributed to a large extent by alleged leadership challenges within the SFTU executive.[908] It is alleged that there was lack of democracy within the leadership's federation which coupled with centralization of power and absence of information dissemination to other executive members. This demonstrates that

[905] Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*.

[906] Russon, "Social Movements…", pp. 82-83.

[907] Russon, "Social Movements…", pp. 81-83.

[908] Trade Union of Swaziland…, p. 66.

workers in Swaziland were not a homogenous entity that thought and acted uniformly. Rather, their participation in trade unions was informed by different reasons and backgrounds. Similarly, Zambian workers were not a homogenous entity. As Miles Larmer argues, "mineworkers' political actions and consciousness were informed by their values and their powerful sense of collective identity".[909]

With the continued leadership challenges, in particular, the absence of democracy within the SFTU, more workers became disenchanted with the federation's leadership. Workers that were active in political parties played a massive role in bringing up issues that related to democracy and absence of worker control within the federation. This was largely influenced by the decision taken by PUDEMO, whilst still underground, to build a strong trade union movement and organs of civil society, through its Programme of Action adopted at its First Congress in 1985. PUDEMO pledged to use any existing legal space to strengthen the forces of democracy within the country.[910] This demonstrates collaboration between labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland.

In the 1990s, after the Decree had effectively banned political parties, trade unions and federations became the only voices challenging government. During this period, there was largely a close link between labour and pro-democracy politics. As Budeli argues, trade unions were used to express the political objectives of political parties.[911] This does not mean, however, that during this period there was no conflict between labour and pro-democracy politics. For instance, in 1990 the SFTU's leadership through its General Secretary distanced the federation from PUDEMO. This happened during the Treason Trial after some workers were said to have been identified as being involved in PUDEMO dealings. The federation's leadership made it clear that such workers were involved in their own individual capacity not that of the federation because they had not been mandated by the federation.[912] This stance by the SFTU further

[909] Larmer, "'The Hour Has Come at the Pit'…", p. 295.

[910] Trade Union of Swaziland…, p. 66.

[911] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…".

[912] Trade Union of Swaziland…, pp. 65-66.

created division and disunity between the workers and political parties. This is a clear demonstration of the conflict between labour and pro-democracy politics. It also demonstrates that political parties, particularly PUDEMO manipulated trade unions to champion their political goals. Further, the diverse workers' views on the activities of the PUDEMO demonstrate the complex relationship between workers and pro-democracy struggles.

By and large, the relationship between labour and pro-democracy politics during the 1990s was collaborative. Swazi workers openly expressed their desire for democratic change in the last two Vusela Commision Reports.[913] Some workers went to the extent of suggesting that they envisaged a democratic system under a multi-party system. In a letter to the editor, *Times of Swaziland*, a writer voiced their concern saying: "the Swazi nation has been in the doldrums ever since the constitution of the country was disposed into the dustbin in 1973."[914] This writer was clearly not happy with the absence of democracy in the kingdom which was caused by the Decree. It also suggests that Swazi workers wanted multi-party democracy in Swaziland in the 1990s.

On 3 March, 1993 the Swazi labour movement's struggle for democracy attracted the support of labour from neighbouring South Africa. This move not only demonstrated support for the Swazi labour movement but also the growing international awareness amongst trade unionists of the struggle that was taking place in Swaziland. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was engaged in a blockade of two major border posts between Swaziland and South Africa in March 1993. This move, according to Matlosa, "signalled the beginning of active and continuing support for the democracy movement in Swaziland."[915] This resonates with Mpfariseni Budeli's argument that "trade unions allied with human rights organisations to oppose the one party or military regime and demanded democracy and respect for human rights.[916] It is worth noting that all the labour formations in Swaziland and the banned political

[913] Swaziland Government, Report of the Review Commission, Nkhanini, 1992.

[914] TOS, "Letter to the Editor", 9 January 1995.

[915] K. Matlosa, "Democracy and Conflict in Post-Apartheid Southern Africa: Dilemmas of Social Change in Small States", *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, 2 (1998), p. 336.

[916] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…", p. 8.

formations were at this time both funded by Germany through the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (IDASA).[917]

The government's failure to address the workers' famous '27 Demands' in the March 1995 campaign led to militant protests. There was a noticeable strong participation of workers in the well-known '27 Demands' popularly known amongst Swazis as *khukhulelangoco* loosely translated to mean 'everyone's involved in the workers'campaign' in March 1995. Whereas these demands sought to redress the poor working and living conditions and low wages, a salient aspect of these demands was its political contents. In particular, some of the demands called for the unbanning of political parties, freedom of speech and association.[918] Clearly, there was strong collaboration between labour and pro-democracy politics in the mid-1990s as the Swazi labour movement became a political actor for democratic change.

It was also during this period that the SFTU's position shifted towards support for the democracy movement. The federation realised the need to mobilise workers for the struggle for democracy, acknowledging that reform could not take place in a repressive environment.[919] The mandate of the SFTU, which had originally been restricted to labour issues, began to address political issues. The SFTU adopted a doctrine, which was similar in tone and substance to PUDEMO's manifesto and strategies. The five points of the doctrine below suggests that the workers had adopted a revolutionary stance:

- we believe that people should govern and this can only happen where the political environment is democratic
- we believe that all people have the right to self-determination, and that by virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development
- we believe that workers everywhere are a vehicle for social transformation

[917] IDASA was a South African based organisation that was formed in 1986 by German officials, Frederik van Slabbert and Alex Boraine. It was initially focused on helping white South Africans to talk about the banned liberation movement struggle in exile. It also focused on ensuring the establishment of democratic institutions in South Africa, political transparency and good governance.

[918] Trade Union of Swaziland…, p. 50.

[919] Trade Union of Swaziland…, pp. 50-51.

- we further believe that workers have a duty to fight for democracy because even workers' rights are stifled under a non-democratic system of governance
- we also believe that silence when workers' and human rights are systematically and brutally attacked and mutilated makes the silent party as guilty as the perpetrator. In fact, the silent party becomes an accomplice.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the SFTU was carrying out the agenda of PUDEMO, it is clear that the federation had dedicated itself to joining the struggle for democracy in Swaziland. The workers had realised that reform could not take place in a repressive environment thus, in their view, better working and living conditions and wages could only be achieved when the country's political system was democratic. This resonates with Budeli's argument that trade unions engaged in politics as their members realised that their right to freedom of association could not be achieved under colonial rule. Hence, they contributed to the struggle for independence and even played a critical role in this struggle.[920] Although Budeli's argument was based on the anti-colonial struggle his argument also applies to post-colonial Swaziland. Swazi workers realised that their right to freedom of association could not be achieved in an undemocratic system.

The SFTU's strategy of shifting from purely labour issues to embracing political matters popularised it inside the kingdom. This was precipitated by a number of reasons. First, continued state repression in some ways condoned and promoted the anti-trade union attitude on the part of employers. Thus, workers continued to be ill-treated in their respective workplaces. This gained the SFTU more support since most people sympathised and emphathised with the workers. Second, issues like May Day celebrations, localization of jobs and affirmative action, constitutional multi-party democracy and governance were finally being addressed by the SFTU leadership and workers were very much willing to embrace that. Third, following the split from the SFTU by some unions in 1992, the federation's leadership was under immense pressure to prove to the workers that they could still organise successful campaigns. This eagerness by the federation's leadership combined with the above mentioned reasons of a fertile ground for social mobilization amongst workers. Finally, the capacity-building efforts by Norway and Denmark

[920] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…". pp. 5-6.

federations of trade unions were beginning to bear some fruits and gave a stimulus to heighted worker consciousness.[921]

Following the 1995 March campaign, workers were engaged in protest action in November 1995. Almost all sectors of the society comprising trade union members, ordinary workers, social activists and civil society groups took part in the protest action. During this protest action there was clear collaboration between labour and political parties because "organised labour, underground political parties such as PUDEMO and SWAYOCO and women, youth and church groups came together for the first time in a unified, labour-led pro-democracy movement action."[922] This followed a conference that was held by SFTU together with PUDEMO, SWAYOCO and allied organisations which intensified calls for the country to undergo a transition to multiparty democracy.[923] The fact that workers led protest action with underground political parties and other pro-democracy groups demanding democracy in the country demonstrates that during this period there was strong alliance between labour and pro-democracy politics.

The SFTU followed this up in 1996 with an indefinite national strike demanding the repeal of the 1996 Industrial Relations Act (IRA) and the unbanning of political parties. The strike was hugely supported and lasted for nine days although clashes between the protesters and the police forced in the SFTU leadership to suspend the strike.[924] Again, the fact that the SFTU was demanding the repeal of the 1996 IRA and the unbanning of political parties indicates that workers' demands were calling for political reforms.

Again in 1997, Swaziland witnessed another protest action by the labour movement when large factions of workers were involved in a mass stay away. The mass stay away started off as a

[921] Trade Union of Swaziland…, p. 51.

[922] Trade Union of Swaziland…, p. 52. See also, H. Macmillan and R. Levin, "Swaziland: Recent History" in: I. Frame, (Ed.), *Africa South of the Sahara 2008*, Routledge, 2007, p. 1156.

[923] Macmillan and Levin, "Swaziland…", p. 1156.

[924] Macmillan and Levin, "Swaziland…", p. 1156.

teachers' strike in October 1997 to force government to give them an 18% wage increment.[925] The Ministry of Education was forced to indefinitely postpone the writing of external examinations due to the teachers' strike.[926] The teachers' strike was followed by a students' strike who were protesting in solidarity with their teachers.[927] During their strike the students also demanded the unbanning of political parties in the country.[928] There was more trouble for the government when about 3, 000 members of the SFTU made a declaration to join the teachers' strike in the spirit of solidarity. The SFTU called for a mass stay-away which began on 13th October 1997.[929] A salient aspect of the mass stay-away was its political content. For instance, the SFTU demanded that the government be dissolved and replaced by a new one since the incumbent one was a failure.[930] Even the government itself was suspicious of the SFTU when it accused the federation of planning to overthrow it.[931] These sentiments were shared by employers who also felt the strike was political.[932] This indicates collaboration between labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland since workers' demands had clearly gone beyond addressing bread and butter issues to calling for a change in the political system.

In 1997, the labour movement demanded democratic reforms in the country. To intensify its move for a democratic Swaziland, the SFTU staged a blockade of all goods entering Swaziland between the 29th and 30th November. The COSATU participated in the blockade in a spirit of solidarity with its Swazi counterparts. The participation of the COSATU went on despite protests from the Swazi Foreign Minister Arthur Khoza. At a meeting with his South African counterpart Alfred Nzo, Mr Khoza complained that COSATU was interfering in the country's

[925] TOS, "Teachers in boycott", 5 October 1997.

[926] TOS, "External Exams Postponed after threat to strike", 8 October 1997.

[927] TOS, "Student chaos hits streets", 13 October 1997.

[928] TOS, "Students want freedom of political activity", 7 October 1997.

[929] TOS, "About 3, 000 SFTU members agreed to join the teachers' strike action", 6 October 1997.

[930] TOS, "Dissolve govt or face strike, govt told", 7 October 1997; TOS, "Demand for new Govt is because of failure-Jan", 13 October 1997; TOS, "SFTU strike political-employers", 7 October 1997.

[931] TOS, "SFTU wants to overthrow govt, says Sishayi Nxumalo", 13 October 1997.

[932] TOS, "SFTU strike political-employers", 7 October 1997.

internal affairs.[933] The COSATU justified its involvement in Swazi affairs when it released a statement saying: "solidarity knows no borders when trade union rights and human rights are violated. Besides, COSATU's founding principles commit it to international solidarity. Swaziland has ratified some of the ILO conventions and COSATU expects it to live by those same conventions."[934]

Despite the clear collaboration between labour and pro-democracy politics in the 1990s there were also conflicts between the two. This complex relationship between workers and pro-democracy struggles is well demonstrated by the conflicts and disagreements among the workers themselves. In 1997, for instance, the SFTU's Assistant Secretary General, Jabulani Nxumalo resigned from the SFTU. Nxumalo's resignation was apparently caused by disagreement within the SFTU executive members over the federation's political affiliation. Apparently, the conflict came after the SFTU formed a partnership with the Swaziland Democratic Alliance (SDA), which was a political front fighting for democracy in Swaziland.[935] Other executive members were against the alliance with the SDA because they felt that the labour movement was being used to champion political goals. Those who were opposed to the alliance with the SDA argued that such an alliance would in the process be unwittingly joined by even those workers with a different political view in the fight for democracy.[936] At face value, Jabulani Nxumalo's resignation represents a group of workers which were concerned about the gradual transformation of the SFTU to a political party. Such a group of workers are only concerned with bread and butter issues and want nothing to do with politics. These are the kind of workers who want to retain a significant autonomy from political parties and avoid meddling with national politics. However, Jabulani Nxumalo's resignation was due to the state's divisive strategies of weakening the labour movement. The same Jabulani Nxumalo who allegedly resigned due the SFTU's involvement in politics in October 1997 was quoted saying it was within the right of the SFTU to address political issues in the country in February 1997.

[933] InterPress Third World News Agency (IPS) Harare/SWAZILAND-POLITICS/ [c] 1997.

[934] Congress of South African Trade Unions, 4 February, 1997.

[935] TOS, "There's more to Jabu's resignation from SFTU-Assistant General Secretary", 4 October 1997.

[936] TOS, "There's more to Jabu's resignation from SFTU-Assistant General Secretary", 4 October 1997.

Nxumalo argued that the SFTU's involvement in politics was backed by 1996 Industrial Act and the federation's constitution.[937] Nxumalo's conflicting statements over the SFTU's involvement in politics suggest that there was third force element. It demonstrates that there was more to Nxumalo's resignation from the SFTU than its gradual transformation into a political party. His earlier comments had indicated that he supported the idea of the federation addressing politics. It is convincing to say Nxumalo was influenced by the state to resign from the SFTU. Oral evidence substantiates this argument as it indicates that Jabulani Nxumalo was strategically planted into the SFTU by the traditionalists as a trump card they will use to weaken the labour movement when it was growing strong. Nxumalo was planted within the labour movement as an informer of the traditionalists to keep them informed of the plans of the labour movement.[938] The Swazi Government, threatened by the alliance between the SFTU and the SDA, applied its strategy of divide and rule and used its trump card and influenced Nxumalo to resign from the SFTU citing the gradual transformation of the federation into a political party.

The allince between the SFTU and the SDA demonstrates that there was collaboration between labour and pro-democracy politics. The fact that other members of the SFTU wanted an alliance with the SDA shows that there was collaboration between labour and pro-democracy groupings in Swaziland during this period. It represents a group of workers that views labour as playing a dual role of addressing workers' grievances as well as wider national political issues to do with the repressive attitude by the state and employers. These workers understood that for them to effectively redress poor working and living conditions as well as low wages, they needed to first address issues that deal with the governance of the state. Thus, the alliance with the SDA will strengthen the labour movement and give it bargaining strength to demand political reforms in the country.

Conflict and collaboration between labour and pro-democracy politics is also well demonstrated in the aftermath of the April 2003 protests. In April 2003 the labour movement was engaged in a protest against the 1973 Decree. The protest was brutally ended by police using teargas.

[937] SO, "SFTU says it can talk politics", 3 February 1997.

[938] Interview with Thulani Mngometulu, 8 June 2019; Interview with Dr. Clement Dlamini, Zulwini, 01 June 2019.

Following the dissolution of Parliament in May the SDA and SFTU called for a boycott of the election under the *Tinkhundla* system in September/October since it was undemocratic.[939] Although the SDA and SFTU agreed to boycott the national elections, several members of affiliated bodies eventually stood as candidates, including Obed Dlamini, leader of the NNLC and chairperson of the SDA, resulting in the breakup of the SDA.[940] Notably, there was a low turnout at the elections which were marked by low levels of voter registration and a voter turnout of just 18.4 per cent, although there is no evidence to prove that the low voter turnout was caused by the boycott.[941] The diverse views of the workers on the pro-democracy agenda demonstrates conflict between labour and pro-democracy politics.

The 2005 Constitution created new expectations and dispensation for the Swazi populace. In particular, the Constitution gave the labour movement the grounds to call for political reforms in the country. In the Constitution while political parties are not mentioned, "freedom of assembly and association" is guaranteed in Chapter Three, entitled 'Protection and Promotion of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms'.[942] However, in the Bill of Rights there is no specific mention of political parties. Consequently, critics of the Constitution have concluded that the 1973 King's Decree still existed in the country despite denials by the Swazi Government.[943] The Constitution came at a time when there was a growing advocacy for introducing democracy within the kingdom. Feeding the call for political reform was the prohibition of political parties. This sentiment was embraced by a large proportion of the Swazi population including trade unions and pro-democracy groups. It was against this background that the progressive forces such as the NNLC, PUDEMO and the SWAYOCO united under a common front called the SDA

[939] Macmillan and Levin, "Swaziland…", p. 1158.

[940] L. Masuku, "Swaziland opposition groups to boycott poll", *IOL*, 3 February, 2008; S. Karume, S "Post-mortem of the Swaziland General Election of 2003"IN: EISA Election Update 2003: Swaziland No 2, 2004, p. 15.

[941] W. Olaleye "Traditional Politics Re-examined: Chiefdom Politics vs Electoral Processes in Swaziland" IN: EISA Election Update 2003: Swaziland No 2, pp. 24-27; Report of the Commonwealth Expert Team, 2003 *Swaziland National Election*, 18 October, 2003, pp. 44-45.

[942] See Chapter 3 of The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Act 2005.

[943] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, Mbabane, 7 February, 2019.

and voiced their criticism of the current traditional system, advocating for the introduction of a constitutional monarchy.

In 2006 there was another blockade of all goods entering Swaziland to intensify the move for political reforms in Swaziland. On 12th April, 2006 COSATU, the South African Communist Party, the Young Communist League of South Africa and the Swaziland Solidarity Network, blockaded the five border posts between Swaziland and South Africa "in support the oppressed people and the workers of Swaziland in their struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights."[944] Although the blockade led to injuries on the protesters since the South African police at one border post opened fire injuring eight people and arrested 25 people[945] the message to the Swaziland government was loud and clear.

The labour movement's struggle for democratisation in Swaziland also attracted the support of ITUC-Africa, a regional trade union organisation. In its letter to the South African President, Jacob Zuma dated 30th August, 2011 the federation requested the South African government to stop supporting the Swazi government because it was non-democratic. The letter reads "we have received passionate appeal and call for solidarity support from our colleagues in Swaziland to demand that your government, party [African National Congress] and country act to intervene in restoring true constitutional participatory democracy in Swaziland."[946] The African Regional Organisation was convinced that the absence of democracy in the kingdom was one of the main reasons for the fiscal challenges faced by the country.[947] The fact that the Swazi labour movement appealed for support from ITUC-Africa in their struggle for democracy in the country demonstrates determination from the Swazi workers to achieve democracy in the kingdom.

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[944] COSATU "Swaziland border blockade", 11 April, 2006a.

[945] COSATU "COSATU statement on border blockade", 13 April, 2006; Macmillan and Levin, "Swaziland…", p. 1160.

[946] Letter from Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa to Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, 30th August, 2011.

[947] Letter from Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa to Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, 30th August, 2011.

Ironically, the labour movement has staged many of its protests on the 12th of April. Vincent V. Ncongwane, Secretary General of the TUCOSWA, provided a brief background to this day when he commented on the federation's activities on the 12th April 2013. Ncongwane commented that

> The 12th April is commemorated every year in the Kingdom of Swaziland, particularly by those opposed to the undemocratic system holding sway in [this] country today. This is a system where the route to parliament is by something called individual merit, where an aspirant MP does not campaign on a political party ticket but as individual. On the 12th April 1973, the King at that time, King Sobhuza II banned political parties in the country.[948]

Clearly, by staging labour protests on the 12th April the labour movement was challenging the 1973 Decree which was announced on this day ending multi-party democracy in Swaziland and marking the beginning of a one-party *Tinkhundla* state.

The above evidence proves that the Swazi labour movement, like their counterparts elsewhere in Southern Africa[949] and beyond, played a prominent role in the struggle for democracy in the kingdom in the post-colonial period. This supports Edward Webster's argument that African labour has and continues to play a critical role in the struggle for democracy in post-colonial Africa. To Webster, trade unions have been very instrumental in creating a democratic order in Africa.[950] Contrary to Berg and Butler's argument that trade unions did not play any meaningful political role in colonial and independent Africa[951] the evidence presented above demonstrates that Swazi trade unions have always been deeply involved in politics.

The Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA)

In March 2012 labour unions in the country united to form the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA), the biggest federation to date posing a great threat to employers and the non-party state. The formation of the TUCOSWA was in line with Article 5 of Convention

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[948] Vincent V. Ncongwane, Secretary General, TUCOSWA Statement on the 12th April 2013 Activities.

[949] See, Gretchen Bauer, "Nothing to Lose but Their Subordination…".

[950] Webster, "Trade Unions and Political Parties…".

[951] E. Berg and J. Butler, "Trade Unions" in: J.S. Coleman and C.G. Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964). See also I. Davies, *African Trade Unions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 11-12.

No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to organise which Swaziland ratified in 1978. This article recognises the right of workers' organisations to establish or join federations and confederations of their own choice.[952] The TUCOSWA was formed following a move by affiliates of the defunct SFTU and SFL together with SNAT to have unity of purpose and action for all workers in the country. The formation of the TUCOSWA dates to 2008 when the SFTU, the SFL and the SNAT agreed to a memorandum of understanding and formed the Labour Coordinating Council (LCC).[953] In mid-2008 the SFTU, SFL and SNAT held a meeting in Pretoria in IDASA offices funded by a German official. The reorganisation of the labour movement was therefore influenced by IDASA. The LCC was formed to plan towards the congress of the newly formed federation. The LCC was designed in such a way that all the three entities, SFTU, SFL and SNAT were represented.[954] According to TUCOSWA's Second Deputy Secretary General, Muzi Mhlanga, the federation "was formed through efforts from international friends, the England United Union in 2012 who facilitated a meeting between the three entities, the SNAT, the SFTU and the SFL."[955] Other international partners who assisted the merger include COSATU, ITUC, ILO and LO-Norway and LO Denmark.[956]

According to TUCOSWA, by 2013 the federation was made up of over 20 affiliates from different sectors, industries and work places in the Swazi economy. Together the TUCOSWA affiliates amassed approximately over 40, 000 workers of the entire 327, 467 labour force in the kingdom. This was only about 12.2% of the total labour force in the country.[957] This figure indicates that only a small portion of the labour force in the country affiliated to the biggest federation to date. This is an indication that a large section of the labour force in the country was still not affiliated to the TUCOSWA. This could be a result of the fact that the federation was

[952] Observation (CEACR) – adopted 2012, published 102nd ILC Session (2013): Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[953] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Strategic Plan Final, 31 July 2013; see also TOS, "Workers Forming One Big Federation", 2 May, 2010.

[954] Trade Union of Swaziland…, p. 71.

[955] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[956] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Strategic Plan Final, 31 July 2013.

[957] Trade Union of Swaziland…, p. 71.

relatively new thus most workers were still sceptical about it. Also, there were strong links of the federation to political parties such as the PUDEMO. Some workers strongly condemned the close relationship between their federation and political parties. Thus, they decided to shy away from affiliating to the TUCOSWA. During the TUCOSWA's Inaugural Congress in March 2012 the federation spelt out clearly its "dedication of selfless struggle of workers in Swaziland past and present, today resolve to form one giant federation to pursue the brave struggles of the Swaziland workers, the poor and the working class under the banner of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland".[958] The federation further appealed to those workers' associations and their members who were not yet part of this union to join them in their undertaking.[959]

In the constitution the federation states clearly its intention on the role of labour in pro-democracy struggles in post-colonial Swaziland. Thus, the federation's statement of intent suggests that there was alliance labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland. For instance, the federation committed itself "to the establishment of a democratic society anchored on social justice, which depends on unity of purpose of the workers, directed at eradication of all forms of oppression, suppression, exploitation, discrimination and other social ills."[960] The federation's strategic plan states that "TUCOSWA is the continuation of a trade union movement that has operated in and struggled with state repression since 1973…The state till today has remained anti-democratic and anti-union. The formation of TUCOSWA is in effect a continuation of the struggle in Swaziland for democracy and free trade unions."[961] The statement of intent gives a clear indication that the federation had moved beyond bread and butter issues to wider societal issues such as politics. The fact that workers had committed themselves to ensuring the establishment of a democratic society in Swaziland demonstrates that they wanted to play a prominent role in the struggle for democracy. Workers wanted political reforms in as far as the governance of the country was concerned. They wanted change of the ruling system from the one-party state *Tinkhundla* to multi-party democracy.

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[958] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Constitution, March, 2012, p. 3.

[959] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Constitution, March, 2012, p. 3.

[960] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Constitution, March, 2012, p. 3.

[961] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Strategic Plan Final, 31 July 2013.

On the other hand, the constitution states clearly that workers wanted to improve their appalling working and living conditions as well as poor wages without undue interference from political parties, employers and the state. In the constitution the federation "seeks to enhance the economic, social and political advancement of the quality of life and work conditions of all workers in the country as well as promotion, development and maintenance of trade unions controlled by workers themselves independent from political parties, employers and governments."[962] This is a clear indication that workers wanted to retain a considerable autonomy from political parties and avoid meddling with national politics.

The TUCOSWA held its public launch on the 1st May, 2011 and the Swazi Government was represented by the Commissioner of Labour. However, since its public launch the federation struggled with the Government for its registration. The registration was eventually granted on the 25th January, 2012 on the eve of a mass protest action organised to put pressure for the registration. The Swazi Government issued the TUCOSWA with a registration certificate on the same day. Consequently, the federation held its Founding Congress on the 9th – 11th March, 2012 marking the official dissolve of the SFTU and SFL in terms of their respective constitutions.[963] TUCOSWA was eventually registered by the Swaziland Government through the amended Industrial Relations Act (IRA). The lawful registration of TUCOSWA was also acknowledged by the ILO Conference Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Conference.[964] However, that the fact that workers had to engage in a mass protest to force the government to register their federation suggests that it was reluctant to register the federation.

The de-registration of the TUCOSWA

The registration of the TUCOSWA was very short-lived, since although it was registered in March 2012 the Swazi Government took the decision to revoke the registration of the federation

[962] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Constitution, March, 2012, p. 3.

[963] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[964] Observation (CEACR) – adopted 2015, published 105th ILC Session (2016): Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

in April the same year. On the 4th April, 2012 the federation received a letter from the Attorney General (AG) of Swaziland informing it of his advice to the Commissioner of Labour to de-register TUCOSWA.[965] This was a clear violation of ILO Convention 87 which Swaziland ratified, guaranteeing freedom of association for workers and employers. Article 5 of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise recognises the right of workers' organisations to form or join federations of their own choice.[966]

Following the decision to revoke the registration of the TUCOSWA, there were a lot of accusations and finger-pointing involving the federation, the state and the ILO as well as other international labour bodies. However, all these seem to have backfired more on the Swazi Government than the federation. This then begs the questions; why was the TUCOSWA de-registered barely a month after its registration by the government? Why did the government agree to register the TUCOSWA in the first place? Several reasons were provided by both camps; the federation and the Swazi government while the ILO bodies have continuously intervened in the issue seeking clarification while ensuring that the Applications of Standards of the International Conference are duly followed.

For its part, the Swazi Government's decision to rescind the registration of the TUCOSWA was purely on legal grounds. For instance, through the AG, the Swazi Government alleged "that the Federation is not a trade union organisation as envisaged by the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) and further that in any event, the Act does not provide for the registration of Federations."[967] Muzi Mhlanga substantiates this allegation when he argues that "when the government de-registered the TUCOSWA it lied to us by saying there was a lacuna in the law."[968] This then begs the questions again; when did the government realise this lacuna in the law? And why did

[965] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[966] Observation (CEACR) – adopted 2015, published 105th ILC Session (2011): Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[967] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[968] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

it issue a registration certificate to TUCOSWA if the IRA did not allow for its registration? If there was a lacuna in the Act for the registration of federations in the country as the government claimed, why were the other federations registered by the same government? Why were the other federations not de-registered since they were registered under the same act which had a lacuna? The executive of the TUCOSWA rightly observed that the same government had registered other federations, the Federation of Swaziland Employers and Chamber of Commerce (FSE-CC) and the Federation of Swaziland Business Community (FSBC) under the same IRA. Further, the same government through a letter dated 16th March, 2012, the Minister of Labour and Social Security, welcomed and congratulated the TUCOSWA for its establishment.[969] Consequently, the explanations given by the state on the de-registration of the TUCOSWA do not make sense, if anything it raises eyebrows and makes one to believe there were sinister reasons for this decision. According to members of the TUCOSWA, their federation was de-registered for political reasons which had nothing to with the IRA. Muzi Mhlanga strongly believes that the TUCOSWA was de-registered for the resolution that the federation took at its Founding Congress. "TUCOSWA's mandate was to change the existing political system in the country and adopt a more democratic system. We want change in the political system not the regime. We've never even once at TUCOSWA pronounced regime change. We want the monarchy as a unifying force but it must be constitutional under multi-party democracy",[970] said Mhlanga. This resonates with Lloyd Sachikonye's idea of 'regime transition'. Sachikonye differentiates between regime transition and regime change. He describes regime transition as "a shift from one set of political procedures to another, from an old pattern to a new one [and regime change as]… a change of regime and leadership succession to the assumption of power by a new leader [or new organisation]…"[971] The fact that the labour movement still wanted the king as a unifying force, albeit under multi-party democracy, shows that they wanted a change in the political system, not the regime as the government believed. It is not clear why the state may have felt the TUCOSWA wanted regime change. There are two possible reasons for this feeling.

[969] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[970] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[971] L. Sachikonye, "The Protracted Democratic Transition in Zimbabwe", *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, 1 (2017), p. 119.

One, it might have been a calculated move by the state to demonise the federation since it felt threatened by its statement of intent. Second, the state may have misunderstood the federation's pronouncement of regime transition to mean regime change. Mhlanga continued, "when they were reviewing our documents they saw that and also our pronouncement that we would not partake in the up-coming national elections since they were undemocratic. That is the reason we were de-registered."[972] These sentiments were shared by the whole executive of the federation. For instance, in a letter addressed to the Director of the ILO in which the federation was seeking for his intervention on the de-registration of the TUCOSWA, the executive gave the following background information leading to the banning and de-registration of the federation. One of the resolutions taken by the federation at its Founding Congress was that "the current system of Government in Swaziland is one that is undemocratic, repressive and dictatorial and that the Federation shall cause for a total boycott of the national elections in 2013 unless the elections are held under a multi-party system."[973] The letter further stated that "following the wide media publication of this resolution, on 21st March, 2012 the Commissioner of Labour wrote to the Federation and demanded a confirmation or otherwise of the said resolution giving the Federation 7 days within which to do so."[974] This proves that the TUCOSWA was not de-registered purely on legal terms since the IRA did not allow for that to happen, rather it demonstrates that the Swazi Government felt threatened by the resolutions taken by the federation, which were clearly political. Afraid of the bargaining strength of the federation the government decided to ban and de-register the TUCOSWA. It should be remembered that the government was initially reluctant to register the TUCOSWA.

The executive of the TUCOSWA did not take the de-registration of their federation lying down, they fought back with all they had both locally and internationally. On the 11th April, 2012, the federation's executive through Mduduzi Gina, First Deputy Secretary General, wrote a letter to the Director of the ILO, requesting for his intervention on the issue. Gina wrote, "[t]he Trade

[972] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[973] Letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[974] Letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) hereby request your office to intervene in the impasse of its de-registration by the Government of Swaziland."[975] The labour movement was aware that trade union federations were protected by labour laws under the ILO thus they used the structure of the Director. The complaint prompted a response from the ILO which sent a High-Level Fact Finding Mission to visit the kingdom in January 2014. The mission confirmed the absence of the worker and employer federations and recommended their registration by the end of April 2014. However, the government ignored the recommendations from the ILO High-Level Fact Finding Mission and repeated calls from the international trade union movement to respect rights guaranteed under international conventions ratified by the country, in particular the ILO Convention No. 87. For instance, the General Secretary of the Industrial Global Union (IGU) Jyrki Raina urged the Swazi government "to revoke the decision to dissolve TUCOSWA…and to start engaging in a genuine dialogue with unions about legislative reforms that will ensure that workers' rights are respected in line with Swaziland's international obligations without any further delay."[976] Despite the repeated calls to rescind its decision to de-register TUCOSWA in 2014 the Swazi Government reiterated its decision to de-register the TUCOSWA. Then Minister of Labour and Social Security, Winnie Magagula, announced a Cabinet resolution banning all federations, with immediate effect, in the country from operating.[977] This meant that the workers' rights to associate freely and to carry out trade union activities completely suspended.

Locally, the TUCOSWA also protested its de-registration. For instance, the federation pulled out of the tripartite bodies such as the Wages Council, the Labour Advisory Board (LAB), the Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration Commission (CMAC), the Swaziland National Provident Fund (SNPF), the Training and Localisation Committee (TLC) and the Social Dialogue Committee (SDC) to make things unworkable. Muzi Mhlanga argues that "the de-registration of the federation deprived us of so many rights so amongst our strategies we decided

[975] Letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[976] TOS, "Swaziland Bans Trade Unions", 17 October, 2014; see also Letter from ITUC-Africa to Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 10th October, 2014.

[977] TOS, Swaziland Bans Trade Unions, 17 October, 2014.

to pull out of the tripartite structures to make things unworkable. We were illegal anyway."[978] Without representation from the TUCOSWA these tripartite bodies would be incomplete thus discussions on labour standards in the country would not be objective since workers' interests would not be represented. Some tripartite bodies such as the LAB were mandated to examine items or texts to be discussed by the International Labour Conference (ILC); prepare for the submission of Conventions and Recommendations to the competent authorities; provide measures for the implementation of Recommendations or the ratification of Conventions; address questions arising out of reports submitted under Articles 19 and 22 of the ILO Constitution; and examine the possible denunciation of ratified Conventions. The SDC was designed to facilitate social dialogue in respect of all other socio-economic issues which are not within the scope and mandate of the LAB.[979] Thus, it was important that tripartite bodies were fully representative for effective consultations.

The TUCOSWA also built an alliance with Solidarity Center in its bid to fight its de-registration by the Swazi government. The Solidarity Center was working with trade union federations in Africa and internationally to build solidarity and fight for workers' rights. The Solidarity Center was also mobilising labour solidarity in Africa and internationally to help the TUCOSWA to exercise its right to Freedom of Association and protect its leadership from government attacks. It has also urged the Swazi government to protect freedom of association, register the TUCOSWA and cease attacks on the federation's leadership. The Solidarity Center has a good history of working with unions in Swaziland. It has also worked with the Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers Union (STAWU). Following Solidarity Center's assistance in building STAWU's organizing and bargaining capacity, the union helped develop a multi-stakeholder industrial committee that led to wage increments for trucks and bus operators in 2013 as well as organizing and bargaining successes in the aviation industry in 2014. The Solidarity Center also helped the TUCOSWA to conduct research on working conditions in Swaziland's textile industry.

[978] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[979] Observation (CEACR), adopted 2017, published 107th ILC session (2018) – Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1981).

The de-registration of the TUCOSWA also attracted the attention of the ILO. Between June 2013 and June 2014 the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards noted with grave concern the discussions which took place in the Conference Committee in particular "with regards to the revocation of the registration of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) by the Government and the denial of its right to fully exercise its trade union rights."[980] The Committee "strongly urged the Government to immediately take the necessary steps to ensure that …all the social partners in the country to be recognised and registered under the law, in full conformity with the Convention."[981] Consequently, the Committee called on the Swazi government to accept a High-Level ILO Fact Finding mission to assess on the ground the progress made on pending matters, including the steps taken to amend the IRA to enable the registration of federations and the actual registration of TUCOSWA.[982] However, despite the advice and comments of the Conference Committee in June 2013 there were no changes in the comments made by the Committee in May and June 2014. For instance, the Committee noted "with concern the Government's recent press statement No.12/2014 issued in October 2014 according to which, pending the amendment of the IRA by parliament, all federations should stop operating immediately. All memberships of the federations in statutory boards were also terminated."[983] During the discussions the Swazi government promised that it was ready to handle applications for registration so that freedom of association is fully implemented in the country. The Committee noted the Government's statement but hoped for the immediate registration and recognition of the TUCOSWA and other federations[984] upon the presentation of their applications in the country to fully comply with Articles 2, 3 and 5 of the Convention.[985]

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[980] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, May-June 2014). See also, Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, June 2013).

[981] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, June 2013).

[982] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, June 2013).

[983] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, May-June 2014).

[984] The Conference Committee had urged the Government register the federations without delay.

[985] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, May-June 2014).

On 31 July, 2012 the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) took the issue of the revocation of the registration of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland to the ILO Conference Committee. Amongst other things the Committee learnt about the allegations of continued repression of trade union activities and reports of police brutality and harassment against trade unionists including trade union leaders of the SFTU, the SFL, and the SNAT, and the arrest and expulsion of officials from the COSATU.[986] The Committee further noted comments dated 29 August and 25 September 2012 from the TUCOSWA on the implementation of the ILO Convention No. 87, on the exercise of trade union activities in the country under a repressive and tense atmosphere and without any meaningful social dialogue, and on the non-recognition and purported de-registration of TUCOSWA by the Swazi government. Due to the continued and long-standing comments from national and international trade unions on the exercise of trade union rights in the country, the Committee firmly recalled that the rights of workers' and employers' organisations can only be exercised in a climate that is free from violence, pressure or threats of any kind against the leaders and members of these organisations. The Committee then urged the Swazi government to ensure that this principle was respected and requested it to respond to the serious allegations of the ITUC and TUCOSWA. The Committee continued; "…recalling that Article 5 of the Convention recognises the right of workers' organi[s]ations to establish or join federations and confederations of their own choosing, the Committee requests the Government to take all the necessary steps to proceed to the registration of TUCOSWA, including legislative measures if necessary."[987]

On 10th October, 2014 the ITUC-Africa[988] wrote to the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland protesting against the state's planned dissolution of the TUCOSWA and the ATUSWA. The letter reads:

> ITUC-Africa strongly condemns your plans to dissolve the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) and the Amalgamated Trade Unions

[986] Observation (CEACR) – Adopted 2012 published 102nd ILC session (2013) – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[987] Observation (CEACR) – Adopted 2102, published 102nd ILC session (2013) – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[988] ITUC-Africa is an African Organisation representing over 17 million workers in 49 African countries, including Swaziland.

> of Swaziland (ATUSWA). This development is coming on the heels of several complaints we have made in recent times concerning the need for the Swaziland Government to engender, as well as create genuine spaces for the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. We have been informed that the Minister of Labour and Social Security, Winnie Magagula, …announced a Cabinet resolution deciding that pending legal reforms all federations should stop operating immediately… Article 5 of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association recognises the right of workers' organisations to establish or join federations or confederations of their own choosing. In response to complaint filed by TUCOSWA and the ITUC on 23 may 2012 (case No. 2949), the Committee on Freedom of Association recommended that pending legislative reforms TUCOSWA is able to effectively exercise its trade union rights without interference or reprisal. An ILO High Level Fact Finding Mission that visited the country in January 2014 and recommended the registration of the worker and employer federations by end of April 2014. Your government has completely ignored these recommendations as well as repeated calls from the international trade union movement to respect rights guaranteed under international conventions ratified by Swaziland, in particular ILO Convention No. 87. …we are shocked that you even argue that your actions are required by the ILO, nothing could be more cynical and farther from the truth…we urge you to revoke the decision to dissolve TUCOSWA and ATUSWA and to start engaging in a genuine dialogue with unions about legislative reforms that will ensure that workers' rights are respected in line with Swaziland's international obligations without any further delay.[989]

By revoking the registration of TUCOSWA the Swazi Government clearly violated Article 5 of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association. Aware of the threat posed by the TUCOSWA to its hegemony the Swazi government de-registered the federation. The government was unwilling to tolerate the existence of an autonomous federation that could challenge its authority and provide an alternative supply of political opposition. To deal with the impasse of its de-registration the TUCOSWA sought the support of the ITUC-Africa. As Mpfariseni Budeli argues, "trade unions allied with human rights organisations … and demanded democracy and respect for human rights."[990] Similarly, the Swazi labour movement allied with ITUC-Africa to challenge its de-registration by the government of Swaziland.

[989] Letter from ITUC-Africa to Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 10th October, 2014.

[990] M. Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…", p. 8.

The loss of African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Status

Amongst other things, the de-registration of the TUCOSWA contributed to the loss of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) status for Swaziland. The de-registraation of TUCOSWA magnified to the world the violation of workers' and human rights. Citing the Swazi Government's systematic violations of fundamental workers' rights, including barriers to union registration, the American Government in June 2014 took the decision to suspend trade benefits for Swaziland under the AGOA. The TUCOSWA strongly criticized the Swazi Government's actions leading to the AGOA suspension and took a position that trade benefits can be restored if the government chose to meet the benchmarks required under the Act's eligibility requirements. Yet, rather than taking the necessary steps, the government in October 2014 ordered all worker and employer federations to stop operations immediately, effectively disbanding the TUCOSWA.

Further, the Swazi Government publicly shifted the blame for the AGOA loss to unions. Swazi workers, however, strongly believe it was the fault of the government that led to loss of the AGOA status. Commenting on the AGOA loss Muzi Mhlanga states:

> It is very interesting since if you recall very well we've lost the AGOA status as a country about two times. The recent loss of the AGOA was purely government's doing. In March, 2012 we formed the TUCOSWA. For the first time in our history we had a full coverage of media houses in the country. The media house recorded everything and took it to government, who in their analysis, felt Swaziland would experience what countries like Zimbabwe, Zambia and Lesotho were experiencing. The TUCOSWA had shown a very strong unity of workers. After registering the Federation in March and giving us a certificate they de-registered us in April citing that there was a lacuna in the IRA. We felt that there was no lacuna in the law since the SFTU and the SFL were existing before so why were they registered if there was a lacuna in the law? The de-registration deprived us of so many rights. Then out of solidarity the American Federation put pressure on the American government to remove Swaziland from the AGOA because she was violating workers' rights by banning the TUCOSWA. That is why Swaziland was removed from the AGOA. It's all lies that it the unions' fault that the country lost the AGOA status.[991]

[991] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

The blame for the AGOA loss by the Swazi Government was not only shifted unto the labour movement but also the American Government. The Swazi Government through Dumisani Ndlangamandla, then Minister of Information Communication and Technology (ICT), made a public outburst accusing the American Government of using the AGOA to bully Swaziland. This public outburst was an embarrassment on the part of the government since it knew what the AGOA entails. There is the AGOA product eligibility and the AGOA country eligibility. Put simply, this means that both the product and country should meet certain requirements in order to be considered under the AGOA. The AGOA eligibility requirements are set out in the legislation but ultimately it is the United States of America (USA) which determines annually, whether or not countries have met the publicly set requirements. Thus, beneficiary status does not hinge on the discretion of the American President alone but also on governments meeting the publicly set requirements. While it is true that beneficiary countries have no say to dispute the status awarded to them governments are not told overnight about requirements, instead they are given enough time and told specifically what to improve on. In essence, no country should claim to be taken by surprise nor bullied by the requirements that were set by the American Government.[992]

The AGOA benchmarks did not come as a surprise for the Swazi Government. The USA was transparent and very clear to the Government of Swaziland. The American Government gave the Swazi Government five clear conditions to meet in order to qualify for the AGOA and was given up to 15 May, 2014 to work on these conditions. These five conditions were related to amendment to;

- the Industrial Relations Act for registration of trade unions and employer federations
- Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008
- The 1963 Public Order Act allowing for recognition of the Freedom of assembly, speech and organization
- Sections 40 and 97 of the Industrial Relations Act
- Dissemination and implementation Code of Good Conduct Practice on Protest and Industrial Action.[993]

[992] TOS, "Government to blame if AGOA is lost", 28 May, 2014.

[993] TOS, "Loss of AGOA is a wake-up call", 30 June, 2014.

The Swazi Government failed to meet these benchmarks. Instead, it was very defensive and critical of the American Government. Then Minister of Labour and Social Security, Winnie Magagula, said: "we are not reporting to the Americans but we are reporting to the ILO. We are reporting to the ILO because these benchmarks were set by the ILO. America comes in because the country trades with them. But the benchmarks are not set by them."[994] This outburst is a clear propaganda campaign by the government to project the US government as the 'bad guy' that was hell bent on infringing in the sovereignty of the kingdom. Knowing the AGOA processes, this was far from the truth. The US Government did not force the kingdom to sign up for the AGOA. Thus, if the US Government were bullying the kingdom as the Swazi Government claimed, the kingdom was free to disengage from the AGOA. In any case, some of these benchmarks are exactly the same of what the ILO has been for a long time asking the Swazi Government to improve on but to no avail. For instance, the ILO Conference Committee has for many years, requested the Swazi Government to amend the IRA. An observation made by the ILO the Conference Committee states that "…the Committee recalled that it has been requesting the Government to amend its legislation on other pending legal issues."[995] Further, the ILO Conference Committee has for a number of years requested the Swazi government to amend the 1963 Public Order Act to ensure that it would not be used to repress lawful and peaceful strike action.[996] These outbursts and criticism were totally unjustified. The relevant ministries could simply table these bills in Parliament with a certificate of urgency, get them passed and gain the AGOA eligibility. Thus, it is not convincing for the government to shift the blame for loss of the AGOA status unto either the labour movement or the US Government.

The TUCOSWA was leading in criticising the Swazi Government for the loss of the AGOA status. The labour movement argued that losing the AGOA status would have serious repercussions for the country and workers. Industries that were selling to the US would be closed and thousands of workers retrenched. About 17 000 textile workers would lose their jobs

[994] TOS, "Loss of AGOA is a wake-up call", 30 June, 2014.

[995] Observation (CEACR) – Adopted 2012 published 102nd ILC session (2013) – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[996] Observation (CEACR) – Adopted 2012 published 102nd ILC session (2013) – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

with about 7-10 percent dependants per worker.[997] Indeed, in November, 2014, the impact of the loss of the AGOA status was felt when about 1, 450 Swazi workers lost their jobs when Tex Ray clothing manufacturer closed down.[998] The federation believed that trade benefits could only be restored when the AGOA benchmarks were met under the Act's eligibility requirements. Yet, instead of taking the necessary steps to meet the benchmarks, the government in October 2014 ordered all worker and employer federations to stop operation immediately, effectively disbanding TUCOSWA

The TUCOSWA, the state, international organisations and the struggle for democracy in Swaziland, 2012-2014

The collaboration between labour and pro-democracy struggles was evident in the teachers' strike of 2012. The strike which came immediately after the formation of the TUCOSWA was popularly known as *waya-waya* loosely translated to mean 'indefinite' in 2012. Feeding the strike in 2012 was the worsening economic situation for the workers as the inflation rate rose above 9%. The Swazi Government made it clear that it could not afford to raise civil servants' salaries despite the 30% pay increase awarded to Members of Parliament and other legislators. In essence, the majority of Swazis lived in poverty since many lived on the equivalent of two dollars per day while Members of Parliament made an equivalent of 2,400 dollars per month, with many added benefits.[999] Teachers challenged the government and engaged in strike action to improve their economic condition. In June 2012, the SNAT resolved to contravene a court decision, after the Industrial Court had denied teachers the right to engage in strike action[1000] and instead went on an open-ended strike over demands for a 4.5% salary increase.[1001] Fom 13 to 14 June SNAT held a two-day plebiscite in which over 6,000 teachers participated to decide whether or not they should engage in strike action. At least 4,506 teachers voted in the strike

[997] TOS, "Government to blame if AGOA is lost", 28 May, 2014.

[998] TOS, "1, 450 Jobs to be Lost at Tex Ray", 22 September, 2014.

[999] Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

[1000] TOS, "Teachers' strike halted", 20 June 2012; TOS, "Industrial Court stops teachers' strike", 20 June 2012.

[1001] TOS, "Defiant teachers vow to strike…*waya waya*!", 22 June 2012.

ballot, with 4,436 supporting strike action while only 70 opposed it. The strike went ahead.[1002] By asking the teachers to vote for the strike the union followed all procedures before engaging in protest action. However, to the government the strike was illegal. For instance, it responded by taking the union to court after the teachers started the strike that saw clashes between police and protesters. The Industrial Court ruled in favour of the government and issued an order that stopped the teachers'strike at 12:07am. The government had filed an urgent application seeking an order to stop the strike arguing that it was illegal since it contravened the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act. According to Judge Dumisani Mazibuko SNAT failed to serve the government with a notice. This claim was, however, disputed by SNAT's lawyer Mandla Mkhwanazi who argued that the strike was lawful since the government was served with a notice early June 2012 informing it of the intended strike action.[1003] The fact that the strike was stopped at the eleventh hour shows that the government used dirty tactics. SNAT had conducted ballots and used the results to serve government with a notice informing it of the intended strike action. In essence, the government's claim that SNAT did not serve it with a notice is unconvincing. The strike was stopped because the government felt threatened by the teachers'strike, not because it was illegal.

Despite the court rulling the teachers' strike went ahead. In a last ditch effort to stop the teachers' union going on strike indefinitely, the Government Negotiating Team (GNT) called the SNAT National Executive Committee (NEC) for a meeting. In this meeting, the union representatives, led by the SNAT President Sibongile Mazibuko, were told that the planned strike action was illegal since the union had not followed all procedures. In response, the union leaders told the GNT, which was led by the Education Minister, that it was inappropriate to call them for a meeting since other civil servants' unions were not present.[1004] This was one of the state's ploys to apply its strategy of divide and rule. By inviting only SNAT and exclude other civil unions' leaders the state sought to divide the bargaining strength of the country's labour

[1002] SO, "Teachers vote for an indefinite strike today", 14 June 2012; TOS, "Mass protest on Wednesday", 16 June 2012; see also Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

[1003] TOS, "Teachers' strike halted", 20 June 2012; TOS, "Industrial Court stops teachers' strike", 20 June 2012.

[1004] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, Mbabane, 7 February, 2019; Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

movement. Following a two-day strike the GNT called the SNAT executive members to a meeting. The government insisted it could not afford to increase teachers' salaries, and the GNT sought to discourage teachers from striking by claiming the planned strike action was illegal. Sibongile Mazibuko countered this claim when she argued that if the government could afford to lose a reported 18 million dollars per month to corruption and increase its cabinet salaries by 30%, it definitely could afford to pay its teachers.[1005] This marked a deadlock in the negotiations between the GNT and SNAT executive.

After negotiations beyween the GNT and SNAT executive hit a deadlock on 21 June, 2012, the teachers' union began an open ended strike in which close to 6,000 members participated.[1006] The National Association of Public Servants and Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU) members soon joined the strike, although 70% of NAPSAWU's members continued working. The Nurses of the Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union (SDNU) also participated in the strike.[1007] On 28 June, members of the Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers Union joined the strike. Many students in urban areas deserted the teacher-less schools and joined their teachers in the protest. The government responded to the strike by cutting striking teachers' July salaries by one third. Civil servants in Swaziland had not had a pay increase since 2010 as the government struggled to finance its massive public wage bill, and protests grew each year. At the root of the unrest was Cabinet's lavish spending and lifestyle while 60% Swazis survived on less than a dollar per day, and the state's refusal to implement democratic reforms.[1008]

The teachers' strike was supported by a majority of the Swazi population. In particular, the mass firing of teachers by the government made most Swazis to sympathise with the teachers and felt

[1005] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, Mbabane, 7 February, 2019; see also Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

[1006] TOS, "Teachers to stage sit in…and then take to the streets in Thursday", 19 June 2012.

[1007] TOS, "NAPSAWU calls for mass strike", 21 June 2012.

[1008] Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

that they should be reinstated and given the salary increment. The teachers' strike influenced the king to call for a three-day *Sibaya* [1009] meeting which commenced on 7 August.[1010]

Figure 10. A photograph of King Mswati III addressing the nation at the Sibaya.

His Majesty King Mswati III addressing the nation at the *Sibaya* in August 2012.

Following popular uproar at the meeting over the dismissal of teachers, the king ordered that teachers be reinstated during the last week of August. Significantly, hitherto this people's parliament meeting, no one had ever mentioned the topic of a multi-party democracy at the *Sibaya*. However, during this peoples' parliament, Swazis not only openly demanded the firing of the entire cabinet for its failure in handling the teacher strike [1011] but also the establishment of a multi-party democracy in the kingdom.[1012] Although, the teachers were not granted the pay rise they had demanded the strike was successful in inculcating the belief that Swazis could try for a multi-party democracy.

[1009] Sibaya is a traditional people's parliament where Swazis convene to discuss matters of national importance upon being called by the King.

[1010] SO, "King Commissions Sibaya", 7 August 2012; SO, "Thousands gather at Ludzidzini for Sibaya", 7 August 2012.

[1011] SO, "Fire Cabinet, says Sibaya", 9 August 2012; TOS, 9 August 2012.

[1012] SO, "Un-ban political parties – people", 9 August 2012; TOS, "Swazis want democracy", 10 June 2012.

Figure 11. A photograph of Jan Sithole making his submission during the Sibaya.

Jan Sithole making his submission during the *Sibaya* in August 2012.

The teachers' strike which was initially about protesting the 10% pay cuts that were proposed by parliament eventually became a political strike about regime transition. Teachers were demanding for an end to the one-party state *Tinkhundla* system and an introduction of multi-party democracy. The teachers also made it clear that they wanted the cabinet of the time to resign.[1013] The salient aspect of the teachers' strike was its political content which was seen in the teachers' songs during their meetings and protest marches. One of the popular songs during the strike was directed to the members of the royal family, particularly princes and princesses who were criticised for thinking that the country belonged to them yet the teachers believed that the country also belonged to their forefathers. The song goes thus *"Swaziland yizwe lomkhulu hhayi bantfwabenkhosi…Swaziland yizwe lobaba hhayi boBarnabas"* meaning "Swaziland is a country of our forefathers not members of royal family nor Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini". Swazi workers used every weapon to fight for their rights including the importation of Swazi culure by singing political songs to challenge their plight at the hands of an unsympathetic government. In Swazi culture it is allowed to vent frustration about anything and to anyone, including the king, using songs, music and dance. This resonates with Teresa Debly's argument that pro-democracy

[1013] Interview with Zodwa Ginindza, Salesian, 25 November, 2017; the researcher was also part of the strike.

groups used creative culture and tradition to challenge the legitimacy of the *Tinkhundla* system. Teresa shows "how political dissidents have used songs and music…to 're-claim' culture and tradition in order to keep the struggle for political reform alive."[1014]

Muzi Mhlanga explains the meaning of the song when he says :

> The workers strongly believed that the source of their grievances and ill-treatment hinged heavily on the political system. What I get in the workplace is dependent on the political system. The workers see the royalty as the source of their problems. The workers felt that the country belonged to every person living in it thus they also deserved a fair share in the economy. A good share of the Swazi economy is controlled by Tibiyo and royal princes and princesses. This makes people to conclude that the political system and the royalty are the sources of their problems.[1015]

Mhlanga went on to explain why the song was also directed at former Prime Minister Barnabas. Mhlanga argues, "many workers directed this song to Barnabas. You can see that in many video clips. He was a target of many workers as they saw him as the source of their problems."[1016] As Prime Minister, Barnabas was viewed by many workers as the source of their problems. His cabinet was unpopular with the workers since it did not increase salaries for them but was mostly viewed as selfish and greedy at the expense of the workers. Circular No.1 of 2010 is testimony to this. According to this circular, the legislators were entitled to exorbitant exit packages. For instance, the Prime Minister was to be paid E1 483 360, the Deputy Prime Minister was to be paid E1 333 907, each minister E1 271 304, Members of Parliament E400 236.[1017] While the legislators prepared these hefty perks for themselves the country was faced with serious fiscal challenges. In 2012 the Swazi government made it clear again that it could not afford to raise civil servants' salaries despite the 30% pay increase awarded to members of parliament and other legislators in that same year.[1018] Further, it was during his tenure that security forces used brutal force to repress workers during peaceful demonstrations. He was also unpopular for his

[1014] T. Debly, "Culutre and resistance in Swaziland", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 32, 3 (2014).

[1015] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1016] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1017] TOS, "Circular No. 1 Put on Ice", 18 September, 2013.

[1018] TOS, "Strike Against Swazi Fat Cats", 25 January, 2012.

infamous for introducing the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008 and other acts which were used to victimise workers and other progressive people in the country.

Another popular song was about introducing multi-party democracy in the country. The song goes thus *"siyaya, siyaya, siyaya kumulti-party, noma besishaya, besitfuka ,siyaya, siyaya kumulti-party"* meaning "by hook or crook there will be multi-party democracy in the country even police brutality will not prevent the coming of multi-party democracy". Clearly, the strike had moved beyond addressing salary cuts to wider national political issues such as the demand for multi-party democracy in the country. This demonstrates a close alliance between labour and pro-democracy struggles during this period.

There has been conflict between labour and pro-democracy politics in the country. This conflict is well demonstrated in the diverse views amongst the SNAT members over the association's affiliation to the TUCOSWA. Some members of the SNAT have questioned the executive's decision to make the union part of the federation without the approval of the majority of members of the union.[1019] According to Muzi Mhlanga, "as far back as the 1990s the issue of the SNAT's affiliation to the SFTU was raised during a SNAT Conference. A resolution was taken to negotiate with the SFTU to make SNAT an affiliate. However, at the time the SFTU demanded a ¼ of subscriptions from unions to be affiliates, a demand which did not go down well with teachers."[1020] From this evidence it is clear that the SNAT wanted to be an affiliate of a federation, however, the union was scared away by the SFTU's demand of contributing a ¼ of its subscriptions which the union leaders thought would be a financial drain to the SNAT. Explaining the TUCOSWA backlash Muzi Mhlanga feels that

> the problem is financial rather than ideological. Each SNAT member pays E3.00 to the TUCOSWA for SNAT's affiliation which totalled to E30 000.00 per month in 2012. Most teachers believe that SNAT pays a lot of money to the TUCOSWA. When I left office in 2016, SNAT received close to E800 000.00 every month from the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) through the teachers' subscriptions. Out of that E800 000.00 only E300 000.00 goes to the TUCOSWA. This E300 000.00 caused a lot of noise because some people told members that it was a lot of money. I also

[1019] Interview with Thobile Dlamini, Manzini, 28 December 2017.

[1020] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

> think it's because members don't understand the role of a federation. It is easy to confuse someone when they don't know the role of a federation. That's the main problem. What people should understand is that trade unions affiliate at two levels; nationally and globally. Globally, the SNAT affiliates to Education International (EI). The ITUC is above EI. Regionally, SADC-SATUC fights on behalf of the TUCOSWA. At the ILO we go there as delegates of ITUC. It deprives teachers' rights not to be affiliates of a federation. Members need to understand the benefits of being an affiliate of the TUCOSWA. There are some things that a union cannot negotiate at federation level. TUCOSWA is a necessary evil to teachers, so to say. SNAT as a union cannot push for a bill since it does not sit in labour boards, only federations sit in labour boards.[1021]

From the above quotation it is clear that the main reason teachers questioned the SNAT's affiliation to the TUCOSWA was lack of understanding of the benefits of being an affiliate of a federation. This is a result of lack of strategies to empower members and disseminate knowledge on the part of the SNAT. This is very surprising considering that the union uses the representative system from the branches to the National Executive Committee (NEC). The union ought to have used the available structures to engage and educate members on the benefits of being an affiliate of the TUCOSWA. On the whole the conflict among SNAT members over the union's affiliation to TUCOSWA highlight the complex relationship between labour and pro-democracy struggles. It demonstrates the different views of workers on the pro-democracy agenda.

Another challenge for some teachers has been the continued links of the TUCOSWA to the PUDEMO. Some of the SNAT executive members at the time were self-confessed subscribing members of political parties. For instance, the SNAT President, Sibongile Mazibuko was a subscribing member of the NNLC while the Secretary General, Muzi Mhlanga was a subscribing member of the PUDEMO. Mhlanga does not believe the links of the TUCOSWA were a problem. He argues that "for a long time the SNAT leaders were subscribing members of the NNLC since it was an old political party. Leaders such as Kati Masuku and Albert Shabangu were known subscribing members of the NNLC. At the SNAT we encourage members to join political parties on their own accord but we don't divide members along party lines."[1022] It also

[1021] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1022] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

did not help that the TUCOSWA's programmes were somehow similar to the PUDEMO's programmes. This has made the SNAT members to conclude that the PUDEMO was hijacking the TUCOSWA to push its own political agenda.[1023] Such a group of workers feel that the SNAT should avoid meddling in national politics and concentrate on improving the poor working and living conditions as well as low wages for its membership. Consequently, some members of SNAT have called for the withdrawal of the union from TUCOSWA.[1024] Although the SNAT members think coming from rival political parties did not cause division it did create confusion particularly those members who were not members of any political party. Again, the different views of workers on the pro-democracy agenda demonstrate that teachers were not a homogenous entity that thought and acted uniformly.

It seems that the SNAT affiliation to the TUCOSWA caused more division within the union. Apparently, the then SNAT executive committed the union's funds to the TUCOSWA without the consent of the general membership. This not only caused division within SNAT but also shook the TUCOSWA since SNAT commands a huge following, so the SNAT withdrawal from the federation would be a big blow. Following the de-registration of TUCOSWA by government on 5th April 2012[1025] the SNAT executive used the union as a surety for the purchase of the TUCOSWA t-shirts on credit. When the TUCOSWA failed to pay for the t-shirts the SNAT as a union was taken to court since it was used as surety. This did not go down well with the general membership of SNAT because they were not consulted when the agreement was made in the first place.[1026] Muzi Mhlanga admitted that there was a mistake with the t-shirts. He argues that when the TUCOSWA was de-registered suppliers were reluctant to engage in business with the federation. The supplier approached him as Secretary General for the SNAT since they had established trust with him following dealings with him for the SNAT. According to Mhlanga the supplier asked him to write a covering letter on the TUCOSWA's order. The letter was meant to be used by the supplier to get a bank overdraft quickly to buy the merchandise. Unfortunately,

[1023] Interview with Bongani Mndzebele, Mahlanya, 28 December 2017.

[1024] Interview with Thobile Dlamini, Manzini, 28 December 2017.

[1025] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland Constitution, March, 2012, p. 3.

[1026] Interview with Thobile Dlamini, Manzini, 28 December 2017.

there was a misunderstanding between the TUCOSWA and the supplier and the matter ended in court. Apparently, that is when the supplier changed the story and claimed that the letter served as a surety committing the SNAT funds in the event the TUCOSWA failed to pay. Mhlanga feels, however, that the t-shirts issue was blown out of proportion by members of the SNAT who were campaigning for votes. In his own words Mhlanga argues "since a trade union is a contested terrain this contestation makes people to gunner for votes using unscrupulous ways."[1027]

There were also allegations of personal differences between the President and Secretary General of the SNAT. The main cause of the differences between the two, was a struggle of political dominance within the union. The President was a subscribing member of the NNLC whereas the Secretary General was a subscribing member of the PUDEMO. The President believed that the Secretary General was using the teachers' union to champion the PUDEMO cause at the expense of the teachers' money. Consequently, the SNAT President, who argued that she adhered to the principle that trade unions should attain their autonomy free from the influence of political parties threatened to withdraw SNAT and its financial support to TUCOSWA.[1028] Muzi Mhlanga denied that political ideologies were at the root of bad blood between the president and him. He argues that like all other executive members from the NNLC they had a good professional relationship with Mazibuko dating to their time as members of the Mbabane Branch of SNAT. The problem started, according to Mhlanga, in 2005 when a circular for a salary review was released. This circular placed the primary teachers on a very low scale. When the issue was discussed at the Mbabane Branch members were very bitter that they were placed on a very low scale in this circular yet they were experienced and long serving teachers. Sibongile Mazibuko who was the Chairperson of the branch at time, in Mhlanga's view, did not address the issue well when she told the affected teachers to upgrade themselves. This left a bitter taste on the teachers. Then in 2006 Mazibuko wanted to be elected to be the SNAT President. At the time policy stated that for a member to be elected president they had to get votes from most branches in the country including their own branch. Mazibuko managed to get enough votes

[1027] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1028] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 27.

from the other branches except her own branch. This, according to Mhlanga, was because members of her own branch were still aggrieved by her comments. That is how she lost the elections to become the SNAT President. According to Mhlanga, Mazibuko blamed him and other branch executive members for her loss.[1029] Another reason for the alleged bad blood between Mhlanga and Mazibuko is that they have the same personality traits. They both do not bulge but stick to what they believe in. This makes it difficult for them to reach a consensus over issues. Mhlanga reiterates that "I don't believe that our differences emanated from me being PUDEMO and her being NNLC. They were just personal differences that were caused by perception."[1030] Interestingly, Sibongile Mazibuko declined to comment on the alleged bad blood between Mhlanga and her arguing that such was dirty linen of the union which cannot be hanged for everyone to see.[1031] The fact that Mazibuko declined to comment on his relationship with Mhlanga suggests that there were problems between the two; the only thing is that the former did not want to talk about it. Although evidence denies that the bad blood between the two was due to political ideologies it is clear that their differences emanated from their political affiliation. These ideological differences were very damaging to the union since it confused the general membership who believed that their executive was a united front. Although evidence indicates that there is a history of a good working relationship between members of NNLC and PUDEMO within the SNAT executive leadership the extent to which this has been successful is yet to be explored by scholars.

Conclusion

The chapter is part of a larger discussion of exploring and explaining African post-colonial states, which has dominated recent studies on Southern Africa. The chapter has demonstrated that the Swazi labour movement, like labour movements elsewhere, played a prominent role in the pro-democracy struggles in post-colonial Swaziland. It has argued that the death of embryonic multi-party democracy in 1973 together with anti-union attitude by the state and employers gave the impetus for the alliance between labour and pro-democracy politics during

[1029] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1030] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1031] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, Mbabane, 07 February, 2019.

this period. Consequently, the Swazi labour movement emerged as a significant opponent of the one-party state that has characterised much of post-colonial Swaziland. Swazi labour, just like African labour elsewhere in the region and beyond, has provided a constant source of discomfort for the *Tinkhundla* regime as they represented an independent power base and held an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in Swazi civil society.

The chapter has demonstrated, also, that in spite of the dominant trend of alliance between labour and pro-democracy politics there were conflicts between labour and pro-democracy politics. These conflicts are well demonstrated in the different views of the workers on the democracy agenda. Some sought to retain a considerable autonomy from political parties and avoid meddling with national politics. While the repressive atmosphere of the state has stimulated the alliance between labour and pro-democracy politics the trend has shown that at times there was conflict between the two. Labour unions in Swaziland have never been necessarily surrogate political parties. The diverse views on the pro-democracy agenda demonstrate that workers are not a homogenous entity since their participation in either unions or politics was informed by different reasons. The Swazi labour movement remains critical for democratic transition and will continue to play a prominent role in this process. In spite of this political role, the labour movement harbours to retain a considerable autonomy from political parties. While this hints to a possible divorce the chapter concludes by arguing that the experience of the Swazi labour movement has demonstrated it remains difficult to disentangle labour from politics.

Although the Swazi labour movement has played a critical role, like other labour movement from the region and beyond, differences can be drawn. Firstly, Swazi labour unlike African labour from South Africa, Egypt and Senegal, has never played a subordinate role to the national liberation movement in the post-colonial period. Secondly, Swazi labour, like labour elsewhere, has provided a constant source of discomfort for the non-party state as it represents an independent power base and holds an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in African civil society. However, unlike in Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Swazi labour movement did not form an opposition party to dethrone the *Tinkhundla* regime. Finally, while African labour in Zambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Southern Africa, won the struggle for democracy the Swazi labour movement has yet to taste that success.

CHAPTER 9

STATE REACTION TO WORKERS' ACTIVITIES, 1939-2014

Introduction

The Swazi labour movement's activities prompted a strong reaction from the Swazi state. Between 1939 and 2014 the state responded in various ways to repress, weaken and pacify the labour movement. The chapter examines the state's reaction to the activities of the labour movement. It argues that the state repression shaped and moulded the labour movement. The Swazi labour movement had to contend with operating in an environment of repressive laws, hostile government attitudes and state sponsored violence. During this period workers including trade union leaders were victimized, harassed, tortured, murdered, banned, arrested and brutalised in many ways. The chapter argues that despite the repression, victimization and brutality that Swazi workers suffered at the hands of the state the labour movement did not lose its identity, dignity and manhood. Instead, it was invigorated to continue to carry on with the workers' struggle for improved working and living conditions and wages and adopted various strategies to insulate itself from the suffering it received from the state. In the final analysis the Swazi labour movement emerged as a resilient force that sought to champion the demands of the workers despite the state repression throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.

State repression and political order

Over the past decades, the study of state repression has increased significantly with different scholars exploring the subject from different perspectives.[1032] Christian Davenport defines state repression as "harassment, surveillance/spying, bans, arrests, torture, and ass killing by government agents and or affiliates within their territorial jurisdiction."[1033] This definition is useful in conceptualizing state repression in Swaziland from the colonial to the post-colonial

[1032] For a similar view, see C. Davenport, "State Repression and Political Order", *Annual Review of Political Science,* Vol. 10 (2007).

[1033] Davenport, "State Repression…", p. 1.

periods. Christian Davenport, in another study, exploring why states resort to depression argues that regimes resort to political repression to react to internal threats. He argues that the causes for state repression are complex and varied and are informed by certain political and economic features which include democracy, economic development, coercive capacity, dependency and lagged repression.[1034] Although Davenport's study is useful the chapter focuses on state repression on workers in Swaziland during the period under investigation. In the same vein, Lauren Young[1035] exploring repression in Zimbabwe argues that many authoritarian regimes resort to repression to suppress and destroy opposition. Young argues that state repression instills fear among the opposition remarkably "reduces hypothetical and behavioral measures of dissent."[1036] Fear is one of the divisive strategies used by authoritarian regimes to pacify and weaken the opposition. Fear was used in Swaziland as a divisive strategy to pacify and weaken the labour movement.

Further, Davenport[1037] argues that the existing body of knowledge treats state repression as a homogenous and monolithic entity within authoritarian states. To Davenport the literature fails to accommodate the diversity that exist within these countries leading to many exceptional approaches to political order unexamined. Studying 137 countries from 1976 to 1996, Davenport argues that there was less repression within one-party regimes compared to other regimes.

Still on Zimbabwe, Michael Bratton[1038] argues that violence was rampant after the June 2008 presidential election campaign in Zimbabwe. He argues that Zimbabwean civilians carefully analysed the violence and abuse they suffered at the hands of the state and opted for justice.

[1034] C. Davenport, "Multi-Dimensional Threat Perception and State Repression: An Inquiry into Why States Apply Negative Sanctions", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 10 (2007), p. 1.

[1035] L. Young, "The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe", *Journal of American Political Science Review*, Vol. 113, 1 (2019).

[1036] Young, "The Psychology of State Repression..".

[1037] C. Davenport, "State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace", Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 44, 4 (2007).

[1038] M. Bratton, "Violence, partisanship and transnational justice in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 49, 3 (2011).

Bratton does well to give agency to Zimbabweans by portraying them in positive manner despite the violence and abuse they received from the state. Similarly, the chapter demonstrates that Swazi workers were creators of their own history despite the violence and abuse they suffered at the hands of state agents.

Lloyd Sachikonye[1039] traces the history of repression in Zimbabwe focusing on the period from 2000 to 2008. He argues that the institutionalized violence caused trauma and fear on the victims state sponsored violence and also suppressed the political freedom of the civilians. Sachikonye argues that the violence motivated the Zimbabweans to shape their destiny by voting for both economic and political reforms.

Erica Chenoweth, Evan Perkoski and Sooyeon Kang review studies on state repression and non-violent resistance. They argue that state repression and non-violent protests are centered on six factors. They also highlight points of departure in which analysis on state repression and non-violent protest might be helpful.[1040] Sabine Carey explores the dynamics of the relationship between protest and repression using data from six Latin American and African countries spanning from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Carey argues that "there is a reciprocal relationship between protest and repression and that protest is consistent over time."[1041] In his analysis, Carey argues that states that practiced liberal democracy were more likely to tolerate dissent although they were just as likely to resort to repression if faced with popular opposition.[1042] Similarly, Ronald Francisco analyses the relationship between repression and resistance and argues that the relationship between the two is still incomplete. Using time series data from three autocratic states, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and the Palestinian Intifada, Francisco protesters insulate themselves from repression by changing

[1039] L. Sachikonye, *When a State Turns on Its Citizens: 60 Years of Institutionalised Violence in Zimbabwe* (African Books Collective, 2011).

[1040] E. Chenoweth, E. Perkoski and S. Kang, "State Repression and Nonviolent Resistance", 1 August 2017.

[1041] S. Carey, "The Dynamic Relationship Between Protest and Repression", *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 59, 1 (2006).

[1042] Carey, "The Dynamic Relationship…".

strategies which include responding strongly to oppression.[1043] In the same vein, the chapter demonstrates that the Swazi labour movement insulated itself by adopting different strategies to respond to the repression that they were faced with in the kingdom.

State repression of workers in Swaziland, 1939-2014

The foundations of repression of workers in Swaziland were laid in 1944 when about twenty-six striking workers at the Havelock Asbestos Mine were arrested, charged and found guilty by the colonial government for organizing the strike. Manuel Sibuyi and Antoni Mhlanga were found guilty of engineering the strike and sentenced to three years in prison. Joseph Dlamini and Salvador Makuyane were sentenced to two years for assaulting Mr Johnson, the compound manager. The rest of the striking workers were given suspended sentences.[1044] The colonial state used the arrests as a divisive strategy to weaken and frighten the workers. By targeting a few workers who were leading the strike the colonial government sought to instill fear among the workers which would eventually stop them from partaking in a strike. Fear would divide the workers and weaken their group solidarity in future when workers decide to engage in strike action as some would support the strike while others would be against it out of fear of being arrested. By giving the rest of the strikers suspended sentences the state was using repressive methods to threaten the workers against engaging in strike action in future. Just as Lauren Young argues that the Zimbabwean state used frightening acts of repression to suppress the opposition[1045] the colonial government in Swaziland through arrests sought to frighten the Swazi workers and stop them from engaging in strike action.

State repression was so pronounced in Swaziland such that from 1993 onwards, the country was regarded by Freedom House as 'not free'. In 2012, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights sharply criticized the country's bad record on human rights. Also in 2012, the US State Department Human Rights Report for Swaziland issued a list of serious abuses from the state agents and security forces which comprised killings by security forces, use of torture,

[1043] R. Francisco, "The Relationship between Coercion and Protest: An Empirical Evaluation in Three Coercive States", *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 39, 2 (1995).

[1044] See Simelane, "Labour, Beer, and Strike Action in Swaziland…", p. 12.

[1045] Young, "The Psychology of State Repression…".

beatings and use of excessive force on detainees, arbitrary arrests and long pre-trial detention, arbitrary interference with privacy and home, restrictions on freedom of speech and press and harassment of journalists, restrictions on freedom of assembly, association and movement, prohibitions on political activity and harassment of political activists and harassment of union leaders and restrictions on workers' rights.[1046] The repression was reflected in the country's budget for the security forces which increased significantly over the years reaching more than 50 per cent increase in 2013-2014 compared to 2012-2013. In 2013-2014 fiscal year the budget was E63.19 million compared to E1.25 million the previous year. Swaziland's budget allocation for the 3 security forces totaled to above 15 per cent of the total government budget of E12.6 billion. Compared to the governments of Botswana and Lesotho in their 2013-2014 budgets was around 9 per cent for their security forces.[1047] Undoubtedly, the increases were a clear preparation for the strong state repression on the opposition which comprised the labour movement and political groupings which the state tended to view as a threat to its hegemony.

Brutalization of workers by the state's security forces

Swazi workers suffered brutalization of many forms from the state's security forces in particular the police. Police brutality had various consequences for workers which included severe injuries and deaths. Noticeable incidents of state sponsored violence and brutality against protesting workers was witnessed in the colonial era when the colonial government brought in a British battalion, the Gordon Highlanders, from Kenya and Bechuanaland Police to stop the labour unrest in 1963.[1048] When the Gordon Highlanders and Bechuanaland Police arrived there were wildcat strikes in Havelock Mine, Mbabane, Pigg's Peak and Big Bend. However, with their arrival there was a rapid return to normality.[1049] This return to normality should be viewed in terms of the efficiency of state repression and the effective use of violence on the striking workers.

[1046] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 22.

[1047] Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 22.

[1048] See *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1963*, p. 4; P. Gosnell, *Big Bend*, p. 231.

[1049] *Swaziland Annual Report for the Year 1963.*

This state sponsored violence and brutality was carried on to the post-colonial period. Swazi workers also had to grapple with violence from the police force. In 1995 the SFTU leadership suffered from state sponsored violence. At the height of the mass-stay away Jan Sithole, Jabulani Nxumalo and Richard Nxumalo were kidnapped by the Royal Swaziland Police and put in a car boot. They were eventually dumped in a place bordering Mozambique and Swaziland.[1050] This was one of the divisive strategies used by the state to weaken the labour movement. By kidnapping the leaders at the height of the mass-stay away the state believed that the workers would halt the protest action.

In January 1996 nearly 100, 000 workers responded with a nine day general strike protesting against the 1996 Industrial Relations Act and the repeal of 1973 Decree. The labour movement also demanded constitutional reforms and a commitment from government not to disrupt union meetings. The act banned mass action by workers, subjecting union leaders to 10 years imprisonment and or a 10,000 Emalangeni fine for causing labour unrest.[1051] The strike disturbed most economic activity, and the state responded violently. Many activists and union leaders were arrested, tortured and beaten by the state security forces, leading to the death of a young girl, Noxolo Mdluli, who was killed by a stray bullet from the police during a demonstration at Khoza residence.[1052] The death of Noxolo Mdluli in 1996 demonstrates that the police were using brutal force to kill the workers. That the police used live bullets to unarmed protesters demonstrates that they were using brutal force. The bullet that killed Noxolo was aimed at an unarmed protestor who was lucky enough not to be hit by it unfortunately it killed an innocent young girl who was not even part of the protest action.

On the evening of 3 February, 1997 approximately 23 members of the SFTU, including executive and ordinary members, were brutally assaulted by police and military officers at the end of an SFTU general council meeting at Salesian High School at around 7.00p.m. Narrating how the brutal attack occurred Barbara Dlamini said “they pounced on us and demanded an

[1050] Interview with Thulani Mngomezulu, Manzini, 01 June, 2019.

[1051] See also, Salmond, “Swaziland: 1- Of Trade Unions…”.

[1052] TOS, “Stop harassing Noxolo’s family, SFTU tells cops”, 16 March 1996.

explanation as to who gave us permission to hold the meeting. We told them that we did not have to seek for permission to hold the meeting and that was where the trouble started."[1053] Barbara detailed that after the brutal beating they were loaded in a police truck and taken to the Manzini Regional Police Headquarters where they were locked in a teargassed room and detained and grilled for more than six hours although they were released uncharged in the early hours of 4 February.[1054] The brutalisation on workers by the police and military officers demonstrates the determination of the state in inflicting pain on workers who just convened a meeting to discuss how to improve the welfare of the workers. Despite the brutalisation the workers struck back and laid criminal charges against the government following the brutal attack.[1055] This demonstrates that despite the brutality that the Swazi labour movement was subjected to it did not lose its dignity as it struck back and challenged the state for violating human and workers' rights.

In February 1997, meanwhile the SFTU was holding its council meeting a joint security force comprising police, soldiers and warders from the correctional services besieged the Swaziland National Provident Fund (SNPF) building were the meeting was in progress for about 20 minutes.[1056] This was clear intimidation and display of power by the state. This was unjustifiable despite arguments from the state that it had received information that an assortment of arms were smuggled into the country by COSATU. The security forces eventually dispersed about 20 late after their patient wait for the union members to come out of the meeting failed to yield the desired results. As they were dispersing security forces were searching every person they came across in the streets of Manzini including motorists.[1057]

[1053] SO, "23 union leaders lay charges against cops", 4 February 1997.

[1054] SO, "23 union leaders lay charges against cops", 4 February 1997. See also, Amnesty International, http://www.amnesty.org.

[1055] SO, "23 union leaders lay charges against cops", 4 February 1997.

[1056] SO, "Stay-away to go on until unionists freed", 4 February 1997.

[1057] SO, "Stay-away to go on until unionists freed", 4 February 1997.

In 1997, the state responded violently when it cracked down forcefully on protesting workers in a general strike. Activists and trade unionists were harassed, tortured, and jailed. During the strike police attacked striking workers in Mbabane and Manzini, on Tuesday, the second day of their strike to press for democratic reform in the kingdom. The Secretary General of the SNAT, Musa Dlamini, was quoted saying "striking workers had been beaten up and one school teacher shot in the eye."[1058] The photograph below shows the bleeding teacher after he was shot by the police just above his left eye. This proves that workers in Swaziland were subjected to brutal assaults from the state's security forces despite that they were engaging in peaceful demonstrations.

Figure 12. A photograph of a teacher that was shot by the police during a strike.

An injured teacher after being shot by the police just above the eye.

The death of Mxolisi Mbatha, treasurer of the SFTU, was attributed to injuries he incurred as a result of a beating he received from police after they broke up an SFTU general council meeting in 1997. An eye witness detailed that "we were at a meeting of the SDA at Salesian High School when police raided and threw up his wheel chair and he came crushing down. If I recall correctly, he didn't die instantly but after a few days in hospital."[1059] This proves that union members were subjected to abuse and violence which unfortunately led to the death of some of them.

[1058] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 43.

[1059] WhatsApp Interview with Bongani Masuku, South Africa, 17 June 2019. Bongani Masuku is on political exile since 1998. He was involved in the 1997 mass stay-away and was also a member of PUDEMO. He is currently serving in the leadership of COSATU.

On 12th April, 2006 COSATU, together with the South African Communist Party, the Young Communist League of South Africa and the Swaziland Solidarity Network, blockaded the five border posts between Swaziland and South Africa "in support the oppressed people and the workers of Swaziland in their struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights."[1060] The blockade did not end well since the police at one border post opened fire injuring eight people and arrested 25 people.[1061] In December, PUDEMO and SWAYOCO members gathering for a march in Manzini were broken up by riot police.[1062] The increasing state repression did not please the donor nations and in May, the European Union announced that it was suspending direct aid to the government.[1063]

According to the workers, their brutality at the hands of security forces did not only lead to torture and injury but also death. For instance, on 1st May, 2010 Sipho Jele, who had just been retrenched as a worker by the SAPPI Usuthu Company died mysteriously while in prison. Jele was arrested on May Day by the police for allegedly wearing a PUDEMO t-shirt to the Workers' Day. He was charged under the Terrorism Act of 2008, denied bail and sent, on his request, to Sidvwashini Correctional Services where the police alleged that Jele hanged himself using a blanket in a jail toilet.[1064] Many people, including fellow PUDEMO members like Mphandlana Shongwe, found this story inconceivable. Their argument was that their comrade had no reason to kill himself but strongly believed that the police had killed him in one of their incidents of brutality.[1065] Their argument was that besides that Jele had previously spent 3 years in prison he had not shown any signs of being stressed so it did not make sense why he would kill himself then. Like many other workers Jele attended the May Day every year. However, on that fateful

[1060] COSATU 2006a "Swaziland border blockade", 11 April, 2006.

[1061] COSATU 2006b "COSATU statement on border blockade", 13 April, 2006.

[1062] H. Macmillan, and R. Levin, "Swaziland: Recent History" in: I. Frame, (Ed.) *Africa South of the Sahara 2008*, Routledge, 2007, p. 1159.

[1063] Macmillan, and Levin, "Swaziland…", p. 1160.

[1064] TOS, "Worker Arrested for Wearing PUDEMO T-shirt, Documents", 3 May, 2010; TOS, "Death After May Day Arrest as PUDEMO Man Found Hanging in Jail Toilet", 6 May, 2010; SO, "PUDEMO Man Hangs Himself", 6 May, 2010.

[1065] TOS, "Mphandlana: Difficult to Accept Jele Killed Himself", 6 May, 2010.

he did not come back home. That Jele is alleged to have requested to be transferred Sidvwashini Correctional from Manzini Remand Centre suggests that he was afraid having experienced police brutality before at the Manzini Remand Centre and did not want to experience it again.[1066] Based on his history of being previously arrested for allegedly bombing the Lozitha Bridge and his membership to PUDEMO, a proscribed political party, Jele might have been a target for the police. Jele's death may have been just a tip of the iceberg; there could be so many incidents of state sponsored violence and police brutality which probably went unreported.

On 8th September, 2010, the last day of labour movement's (SNA, SNAT and SPRAWU) mass protest ended in chaos when more than 300 protesting workers were violently prevented by state security forces from delivering a petition to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The confrontation was caused by the presence of political activists such as Wandile Dludlu, then SWAYOCO leader among the protesters which the security forces wanted to remove. Junior officers were sent to search for Dludlu in the crowd and ended up confronting the wrong people. Wonder Mkhonza, SPRAWU's leader was the first be forcefully bungled into a police Casper vehicle after being beaten with batons for resisting being attained. Upon realizing that they had detained the wrong person the junior officers went back to the crowd to search for Dludlu. Again, the wrong person, a Dlamini teacher, was taken for detention. In a third attempt Dludlu was eventually identified in the crowd and forcefully dragged, screaming and kicking but without success, into a police Casper vehicle for detention.[1067] The photograph below demonstrates that police used force to remove Wandile Dludlu from the protesting crowd because he was a political activist.

[1066] TOS, "Death After May Day Arrest as PUDEMO Man Found Hanging in Jail Toilet", 6 May, 2010.

[1067] TOS, "Mass Protest ends in Chaos", 9 September, 2010.

Figure 13. A photohraph showing police forcefully removing Wandile Dludlu from the crowd during a mass protest action.

Political activist, Wandile Dludlu, being forcefully taken to a police Casper Vehicle during a mass protest in 2010.

Trade unionists were not spared from the confrontation with the security forces. For instance, Sibusiso Lushaba of the Swaziland Nurses Association (SNA) was involved in a verbal confrontation with a police for allegedly insulting him. SNAT's Secretary General Muzi Mhlanga and Hhohho Regional Commander Senior Superintendent Polycarp Ngubane also clashed over the presence of political activists in the demonstrations.[1068]

On 10th September, 2010 the labour movement was not happy with PM Sibusiso Dlamini's comments to use 'sipakatane' to deal with rowdy dissidents and foreigners. The labour movement demanded the PM to withdraw his statement since they felt it was a declaration of war on them and their sympathisers. 'Sipakatane' was a Portuguese word 'bastinado' which means torture that involved flogging the bare soles of a person's feet with a spiked wooded or metal implement to inflict pain on them and make the feet bleed to make them unable to walk for a long period of time. The PM made the statement after the COSATU joined labour protests to support Swazi labour movement in an act of solidarity. The SFTU, SFL and SNAT all

[1068] TOS, "Mass Protest Ends in Chaos", 9 September, 2010.

condemned the PM's statement arguing that the Industrial Relations Act gave them the right to freedom of assembly and association.[1069]

On 12th April, 2011 pro-democracy demonstrations were dispersed using violence by the police leading to the arrest of several demonstrators. Although the protests were announced very early and were peaceful, they were violently suppressed by heavily armed police. The police used teargas against the peaceful demonstrators, fired live bullets and detained hundreds of protesters which included at least eight trade union leaders. Everyone wearing a t-shirt or cap of the proscribed political parties was arrested.[1070] On the same day teachers were bolted inside the SNAT- Center to stop them from marching. Rubber bullets were used to disperse the crowd of teachers. According to Simangele Mmema of the SNAT, more than 1, 000 protesters who were singing and chanting at SNAT Center were dispersed by police using water cannons.[1071] The protests were supporting demands for democratic rights for the people of Swaziland.[1072] This is a clear demonstration of state turning on its peaceful citizens through repression.

On 30th August, 2011 the ITUC-Africa reported the Swazi Government to the president of South Africa for brutalization, victimisation and repression of workers. The federation argued that the lives of the Swazi people "continue to be marked by a large dose of problems in the field of democratic and human rights. These include extrajudicial killings by security forces…, the use of torture by the police, beatings and the use of excessive force on detainees, restrictions on freedom of assembly, association, and movement, prohibitions on political activity and harassment of labour leaders, and restrictions on workers' rights."[1073] This clearly demonstrates

[1069] TOS, "Withdraw 'Sipakatane'", 10 September 2010. See also, TOS, "'Spakatane' for Rowdy Foreigners", 9 September, 2010.

[1070] Letter from Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa to Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, 30th August, 2011.

[1071] News Africa, "Police disperse Swaziland protesters", 12 April, 2011.

[1072] Letter from Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa to Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, 30th August, 2011.

[1073] Letter from Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa to Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, 30th August, 2011.

that Swazi workers were brutalised, victimised and repressed in post-colonial Swaziland despite that they were engaging in peaceful demonstrations.

The ITUC, on several occasions, condemned the failure by the state to respect trade union rights. The confederation, particularly, was not happy with the fact that trade unionists were under surveillance because they were closely monitored by the state's security forces. Senior police officers abused their powers by conducting unlawful searches without warrants. Thus, police officers raided homes and businesses of the targeted people willy-nilly without a search warrant. On 23rd June, 2011 just five days following the conclusion of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva, where the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) condemned several violations of Convention 87 on Freedom of Association in Swaziland, police raided the home of Barnes Dlamini, then President of the SFTU and an internationally acknowledged and well-respected trade unionist. Although there was a search warrant this time it mentioned the 'removal of any bomb-making materials'. Interestingly, during the raid the police are said to have taken political literature.[1074] Clearly, the search warrant was a disguise to invade Mr Dlamini's privacy and to confiscate whatever the police could find.

In some instances the police closely monitored trade union leaders particularly on days of protest actions. Recalling some experiences Sibongile Mazibuko argues that every time she went to protests she used to be escorted by the police. She detailed: "I'd find police at the gate of my home, every corner of the every street. I used to speed my car very fast to run away from them. At one point I had to dress differently to disguise and pass through road blocks that were placed all over the country."[1075] Mazibuko's experience was just a tip of the iceberg, many trade unionists treated in the same manner by the police.

On 12th April, 2012, the police followed TUCOSWA's First Deputy President Mduduzi Gina from the SFTU's offices in Manzini to Mbabane. Gina was attending a protest march that was organised by TUCOSWA, which had already been called off. When he arrived in Mbabane he

[1074] Letter from Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa to Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, 30th August, 2011.

[1075] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, 7 February, 2019.

was ordered to leave Mbabane by a group of more than 20 police officers and warders. Gina appeared to have been aware of the presence of the police even before he left Manzini at 9:40 am. He was quoted saying "you will see what they will do to me, as I have just heard that they detained Muzi Mhlanga in Mbabane."[1076] The police vehicle followed Gina's car but never overtook his car even when he slowed down. At the Mahhala traffic circle at 9:52 am Gina tried to run away from the police and drove towards the University of Swaziland Kwaluseni campus before heading towards Lozitha. The disguised police officers who wore plain clothes, followed Gina's car and seemed content with keeping their distance from Gina's BMW although they would occasionally speed up in traffic along the Manzini-Mbabane highway which Gina joined at 9:57 am at Lozitha Bridge. Despite that along the highway, at Mvutjini there was a roadblock Gina's car was not stopped by the police for a search at 10:06 am. He arrived at the Coronation Park in Mbabane at 10:17 am where he was met with a heavy police presence who forced him back into his car.[1077] The evidence presented above rejects Lauren Young's argument that state repression instills fear among the opposition and remarkably "reduces hypothetical and behavioral measures of dissent."[1078] Clearly, despite being closely monitored by the police Gina showed no signs of fear. The psychology of fear did not stop Gina from attending a protest march.

However, not all workers were able to defy state repression. The President of SNAT Sibongile Mazibuko decided to stay away from the April 2012 protest due to fear of being detained. After SNAT was banned by a Court Order from attending the protest march, the President announced that teachers were not expected to join the protest action. Subsequently, Mazibuko stayed at work on the day of the protest.[1079] In Siteki, a small town in the Lubombo region of Swaziland where workers' mass protests was anticipated was quiet and business was normal. This was a huge contrast to the previous day when there was huge worker participation in this town leading to the closer of government offices. This was caused by the heavy police in this small town

[1076] TOS, "Police follow TUCOSWA's Gina from Manzini to Mbabane", 13 April 2012.

[1077] TOS, "Police follow TUCOSWA's Gina from Manzini to Mbabane", 13 April 2012.

[1078] Young, "The Psychology of State Repression…".

[1079] TOS, "Sibongile stays away", 13 April 2012.

since security forces were placed in every corner waiting to pounce on the protesters.[1080] This shows the effectiveness of police brutality on the workers who were prevented by the heavy presence of the security forces from engaging in protest action. Hearing news of protesters being detained and heavy police presence was a huge factor for the failure of the mass protest in Siteki. It resonates with Young's argument that fear has a significant influence on worker participation in protest marches.[1081] In the final analysis the evidence presented from Gina, Mazibuko and the failed protest march in Siteki demonstrates that workers are a diverse group with different behavioural patterns that are informed by different backgrounds.

On 11 April 2012, ahead of the 12 April protests, the PM Sibusiso Barnabsa Dlamini sternly warned the labour movement not to engage in the protests. The PM's warning was followed by a parade of armed soldiers in a convoy of armoured vehicles in Mbabane where the main protests were to take place. "Eight army trucks entered the city with blaring filing the atmosphere, and drove through amid stares from members of the public. Soldiers carrying guns protruded from the army vehicles' rooftops as the convoy made its way up Gwamile Street…For moments the city centre came to a standstill as shoppers, tenants, commuters, employers and loafers stood transfixed by the rare sight."[1082] In the afternoon, the PM issued a statement warning that national security agents were instructed to protect life and property against any protest action.[1083] However, the labour failed to heed this warning. Instead, the unions were defiant and continued with the protest marches.

The state kept its promise and responded violently to the workers' protests. On 12th April, 2012 the Swazi state violently stopped the April Protests bundling TUCOSWA leaders in a police van and dumped them them in different areas.[1084] Trade union leaders and activists were detained by the police. Wonder Mkhonza, who was Deputy Secretary General of SPRAWU was arrested and

[1080] TOS, "Cops warm Siteki", 13 April 2012.

[1081] Young, "The Psychology of State Repression…".

[1082] TOS, "PM's strong warning", 12 April 2012.

[1083] TOS, "PM's strong warning", 12 April 2012.

[1084] TOS, "April 12 protests stopped!", 13 April 2012.

detained by Nhlangano police. He was ordered by the police to remain in Nhlangano during the protests and not set his foot in Manzini or Mbabane until further notice from the police. The same treating was given to Emmanuel Dlamini who was the Recording Secretary for SNAT as well as Sidumo Dlamini who was Chairperson of the SNAT elections committee.[1085] Further, the state declared open war on trade unionists in all cities and towns as armed forces held roadblocks harassing anyone wearing a union t-shirt in all roads leading to Mbabane and Manzini.[1086] By arresting, detaining, harassing and ordering trade unionist not to attend protests the state used repression to weaken and pacify the labour movement.

The harassment, arrests and detentions were also extended to South African journalists from e.tv who come into the country to cover the protests. The two journalists, Tumaole Mahlaoli and Meshack Dube, also had their passports confiscated from them by the police. No reasons were given by the police for detaining and confiscating the passports of the two journalists. However, Police Public Relations Officer Superintendent Wendy Hleta provided a reason when she said foreign journalists were required to have accreditation to cover any activity in the country.[1087] This justification is unconvincing considering that nothing was said to the journalists when they were detained. There is also no evidence suggesting that they did not have accreditation and it is very improbable that they would come into an authoritarian state like Swaziland without the necessary requirements. The real reason they were detained was to prevent them from covering the protests which would expose to the international community the brutal repressive methods used by the state on peaceful demonstrators.

The state, through the security forces, successfully squashed the labour movement's April 12 Protests. Trade union leaders were forced to abandon the protest march at around noon on the second day of the protests. The security forces succeeded in dividing the workers by not allowing them to assemble with each other or other members at the Coronation Park.[1088]

[1085] TOS, "Reports of detained union leaders", 12 April 2012.

[1086] TOS, "Reports of detained union leaders", 12 April 2012.

[1087] TOS, "Police detain 2 e.tv journalists", 12 April 2012.

[1088] The Coronation Park was the assembly arena for workers whenever they had protests in Mbabane. The labour movement had made it a habit to assembly at the Coronation Park singing songs and making speeches while waiting

Moreover, the trick lay in successfully turning back many workers in all roadblocks leading to Mbabane. The protest action was scheduled to begin at 9:00 am at the Coronation Park. However, at this time the park was only filled with security forces. Union leaders were told that the protest march had been banned.[1089] This pacified the bargaining strength of the few workers that were in Mbabane which made it easy for the security forces stop them from assembling at their usual assembly arena, the Coronation Park.

Some union leaders, however, fought back and stood up to the security forces. TUCOSWA's Second Vice President Sipho Kunene and SNAT Secretary General Muzi Mhlanga were bundled into a police van after they were seen meeting with other unionists. The two unionists had remained behind when other unionists dispersed as soon as they saw about 20 security officers coming their way, opposite the Theatre Club at the Embassy House building. The security officers confronted the two unionists. "What are you doing here? Please, I request that you move away because meetings are not allowed in the city today", a police officer was quoted telling the two unionists. Mhlanga replied: "I am a resident of Mbabane and it is my right to be here." The two were subsequently bundled into the back a police van, without resistance although Mhlanga was heard shouting "Viva TUCOSWA, viva! Long live TUCOSWA long live!"[1090] By shouting viva TUCOSWA and long live TUCOSWA Mhlanga was clearly provoking the police and demonstrated that he was not afraid of them and was ready to suffer for the federation. The two were dumped at different locations in the city.[1091]

The scattered unionists eventually regrouped inside the offices of SUFIAWU to discuss a way forward. Despite that the state won round one by successfully forcing the labour movement to abandon its protest march, the unionists did not lose dignity. They were able resist the pressure from senior security officers who sought to humiliate the unionists by requesting them to go

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for workers from distant places to arrive. It is a place where the labour movement gathered its bargaining strength before engaging in protest marches.

[1089] TOS, "Security forces squash protest action", 13 April 2012.

[1090] TOS, "Security forces squash protest action", 13 April 2012.

[1091] TOS, "Security forces squash protest action", 13 April 2012.

around the city informing TUCOSWA members that the march had been called off. The security officers even went to the extent of offering to provide transport to the unionists for this exercise. However, the unionist refused the offer and resolved to tell the security officers that they would just disperse without going around telling members that the march was cancelled.[1092] This demonstrates that in spite of the repression it was exposed to the Swazi labour movement retained a sense of dignity and identity.

Even though the need for reform was quite evident, the labour movement and other progressive movements found themselves in a position where opportunities to express their discontent were becoming fewer and far between, especially as the state increased its crack down on opposition elements in society. With the Swazi labour movement together with the banned political parties pressing for a transition to multi-party democracy were severely repressed, assaulted and imprisoned, and progressive groups banned from participating in civil society. TUCOSWA, a Solidarity Center ally, was consistently targeted by the state.

The wave of protests across the country in 2012 prompted the state to reinforce its security calling up prison guards to help the overwhelmed police force. During the teachers' indefinite strike the police arrested many teachers under ambiguous charges as teachers travelled to neighbouring schools to encourage others to join the strike. The state also responded to crowds of strikers with threats, beatings, water cannons, rubber bullets, and tear gas. When nurses at the Mbabane government hospital attempted to start a march from the building, police in riot gear blocked them. The nurses in response danced in the parking lot and sang protest songs. The plight of civil servants' prompted sympathy from parents who clearly understood the need for salary increments. In late July, a group of parents who were worried that their children were no longer attending the abandoned schools attempted to deliver a petition to Parliament, demanding a raise for teachers, but police blocked them. They gathered in a nearby field and sang protest songs.[1093] This clearly demonstrates that state brutality on protesters made the general Swazi populace to sympathize with the protesters.

[1092] TOS, "Leaders refuse 'assignment' to call off protest", 13 April 2012.

[1093] Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

In February 2013, the police using brutal force to stopped a prayer that was organised by civil society groups. The purpose of the prayer amongst other things was about the deteriorating socio-economic status of the kingdom. The prayer was also about the smooth and peaceful transition of the country to multi-party democracy. Then on the 9th March, 2013, the police without any judicial authority used violence to stop the one-year commemoration of the TUCOSWA from taking place. Again on 12th April, 2013, the TUCOSWA and political parties were discussing over the 40 year period since the banning of political parties. On the same day Wonder Mkhonza, then Acting Secretary General of SPRAWU and a National Executive Committee Member of the Federation was arrested on claims that he was a member of PUDEMO.[1094]

State victimisation of workers in Swaziland

The first noticeable instant of state victimisation was witnessed in the aftermath of the 1972 elections when the NNLC Member of Parliament, Bhekindlela Thomas Ngwenya from Vuvulane was deported under Section 9 of the Immigration Act of 1964. Ngwenya's only crime was winning the elections which won himself and his party a seat in parliament. He was then victimized and labeled a non-Swazi despite clear evidence showing that his parents were Swazi.[1095] His deportation was due to the hatred of political parties by the traditionalists who saw the NNLC's victory as a threat to their hegemony. Although Ngwenya's case does not point directly to the victimization of workers, it does however, reflect to what workers experienced.

A classic example of victimization of workers by employers is that of Vincent Ncongwane, who was the General Secretary of SFL and SUFIAWU. Due to his involvement in trade union activities, Mr. Ncongwane was victimized and accused of not being a true Swazi and ended up being frustrated by his employers at Swaziland Savings and Development Bank (SDSB). Ncongwane testified that

[1094] "Living in a police state", TUCOSWA Statement on the 12th April, 2013 Activities.

[1095] H. Kuper, Sobhuza II, *King and Ngwenyama of Swaziland: The Story of an Hereditary Ruler and His Country* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1978), p. 334; see also, Sereo, "The Contribution of the People's United Democratic Movement…", pp. 33-34.

> around the 1988/1989 period, we started negotiations with management of SDSB on issues of collective agreements and I [was] part of that negotiating team. We end[ed] up clashing and reaching a deadlock, and …management start[ed] victimizing members, including myself. I was living under temporary resident permit at that time, and my employer started saying I should renew the permit as a precondition for my work contract to be considered valid. My employer was fully aware that there are processes involved in such a renewal as they were the ones involved in making such on my behalf, through the Department of Home Affairs. My case was different because I was born in Swaziland and was not an expatriate. It was becoming clear to me that I was going to lose my job. It was then that SUFIAW decided to take the matter up, citing victimization, this included briefing members around the country on this issue, and the primary intention was to embark on a strike action, and by that time I was no longer working since my permit disallowed me to because it was not renewed. This strike action started at SDSB, led by Mrs. Winnie Magagula, David Mncina and Israel Mahlalela. The Cabinet, under former Prime Minister Obed Dlamini, realized that this strike might disrupt banking services and embarked on a process to re-instate me. The then Director of SDSB, Sam Kuhlase was instructed to write a letter informing me to come back to work. I eventually obtained my Citizenship certificate on the 11th June 1996, signed by Prince Sobandla as Home Affairs Minister, based on the Citizenship Act of 1992."[1096]

The above quotation demonstrates that Vincent Ncongwane was victimized for his involvement in trade union activities. Both the state and his employer used his permit renewal as a tool to frustrate him.

Another example of victimization of trade unionists by the state is that of former SFTU General Secretary, Jan Sithole, who was labeled as unSwazi and threatened with deportation for his lead role in the popular 27 Demands during the 1995/1996 period.[1097] The state, threatened by Sithole's growing popularity during the mid-1990s, sought strategies to make him unpopular within the labour movement and further discourage workers from participating in strikes alleging that a non-Swazi was leading them 'astray'. This was a strategy by the state to cause division among the workers and weaken the labour movement. Despite the state's divisive tricks, Swazi workers and other trade unions rallied behind Sithole and the entire leadership of the SFTU and continued the struggle for what they believed were workers' rights.

[1096] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 43.

[1097] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland, *Celebrating 52 Years*, p. 43.

Repressive laws to suppress the labour movement

Besides the physical repression the labour movement in Swaziland also had to contend with legislative repression. Between 1963 and 2014 the Swazi state passed a series of acts which were aimed at repressing and pacifying the labour movement. However, despite the repressive laws the labour movement fought back and continued to fight for workers' rights. The mother of all repressive laws was Public Order Act of 1963 that Swazi workers had to contend with. In particular, the 1963 Public Order Act was used to repress lawful and peaceful protests.[1098] Sibongile Mhlanga argues that "the 1963 Public Order Act was used by the state to crack down opposition. This act was used against the NNLC in 1973. The act forbids people of more than three to meet for political reasons. Failure to do so led to arrests and detentions.[1099] Consequently, protesters were still detained for exercising their right to freedom of speech and were deprived of their fundamental rights.

The 1973 Decree and subsequent State of Emergency suppressed the labour movement as workers' activities were impeded, although for a short period. Freedom of speech and assembly were prohibited and repressive laws were used to frighten any form of opposition. Despite that opponents were silenced and the repressive laws brought fear unto them the labour movement was not deterred from challenging the state and fighting for workers' rights. In 1975 the Swazi Government attempted to send an undercover police officer to the ILO's yearly tripartite meeting posturing as the workers' representative. This attempt, however, was unsuccessful because the labour movement was able to expose the government plan to suppress workers' voice and the police officer was replaced by Nomthetho Simelane, a trade unionist. The suppression of labour movement's activities lasted until 1977 when the teachers' and bankers' unions continued the workers' struggle for better conditions and wages.[1100] This demonstrates that despite repression by the state the labour movement struck back and continued the struggle for workers' rights.

[1098] Main Findings of the ITUC Solidarity Visit to Swaziland, 15 May, 2015.

[1099] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, 7 February, 2019.

[1100] For a similar view, see Solidarity Center Report, Justice for all: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Swaziland, p. 8.

In 1996 the government responded to the labour movement's protest action by enacting a new Industrial Relations Act (IRA) of 1996 which banned mass action by workers, subjecting union leaders to 10 years imprisonment and or a 10,000 Emalangeni fine for stirring labour unrest.[1101] Also, the 1996 IRA contained several provisions which flouted some of the basic principles of freedom of expression which included authorizing the Labour Commissoner to de-register trade unions at will.[1102] The state wasted no time in implementing the new IRA when in 1996 many activists and union leaders were arrested, tortured and beaten by the state security forces, and leading to the death of a young girl that was killed by police during a demonstration at Khoza residence.[1103] This demonstrates that passing repressive laws was aimed at weakening and pacifying the labour movement.

The Swazi state used the High Court to obtain restraining orders against striking workers in the process bypassing the Industrial Court which dealt with labour related issues. In 1997, the state fought very hard to stop the mass stay-away by applying divide rule strategies in order to cause confusion and pacify the labour movement. Shortly before the stay-away got underway the Prime Minister, Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini declared that the impending stay-away was boycott under the Public Order Act of 1963 and threatened strikers that they faced imprisonment not exceeding six months of a non-bailable offence. The state followed this up with an Extraordinary Government Gazette that was released by the AG, Sipho Zwane on the eve of the stay-away warning members of the public and the perpetrators of the strike that they would be arrested if the breached the law.[1104] This was clear strategy of divide and rule which was aimed at stopping members of the public and union members from partaking in the strike. This strategy, however, did not work since the strike went ahead showing the determination on the part of the labour movement to press on with the workers' demands. To cause more confusion within the labour movement the government released an article on *The Times of Swaziland* on December 31, 1996 informing the nation that the strike was called off. However, the SFTU was

[1101] See also, Salmond, "Swaziland: 1- Of Trade Unions…".

[1102] Solidarity Center Report, Justice for all: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Swaziland, p. 8.

[1103] See also, Salmond, "Swaziland: 1- Of Trade Unions…".

[1104] SO, "Premier declares stay-away a boycott", 1-2 February 1997.

quick to clear the misleading information reiterating that the strike was going on. Jabulani Nxumalo of the SFTU stated that "we are not shamed to mention ever since that resolution of November 17, 1996, no invitation by Government has been extended to the SFTU to go and dialogue on these issues. And the SFTU executive, ever since that day, has been on call 24 hours."[1105] By announcing that the stay-away was no longer going ahead the government was trying to bring confusion among the workers and thus weaken the collective bargaining strength of the labour movement. The SFTU executive was aware of such tactics from the government and was quick to clear the confusion. Consequently, the strike went ahead despite the divisive tactics from the state.

In 1997 in an attempt to stop a strike, the police arrested the SFTU leadership. "They were charged with threatening bus owners to keep their vehicles off the road, but were released after a magistrate found there was no basis to the charges."[1106] In fact the bus owners rejected the police claims and stated that they were never intimidated by the trade unionists.[1107] This proves that the state used dirty tactics to stop workers' protests by arresting the SFTU leadership knowing very well that these charges were baseless. The arbitrary arrest of these trade union leaders was a ploy to avert a strike. It shows that trade union leaders were also arrested by the state's security forces for their role in organizing and leading the strikes.

On 31 January 1997, the SFTU leadership, Jan Sithole, Jabulani Nxumalo, Richard Nxumalo and Themba Msibi, were arrested and detained in Mankayane police custody before being brought to court on next Monday 3 February and charged with contravening Section 12 of the Public Order Act of 1963. About 100 people comprising family members of the arrested unionists and SFTU members filled the Mankayane Court to hear the outcome of the hearing. Despite that the hearing was delayed for more than 45 minutes as Magistrate Stanley Maphalala came late from his lunch the people were not discouraged from waiting since they wanted to know the ruling.[1108]

[1105] SO, "Times article just misleading – SFTU", 2 January 1997; SO, "Mass stay-away still on – SFTU", 2 January 1997.

[1106] htttp://www.wikipedia, Jan Sithole, retrieved on 14 August, 2018.

[1107] htttp://www.wikipedia, Jan Sithole, retrieved on 14 August, 2018.

[1108] SO, "Detained union leaders appear in court", 4 February 1997

The late arrival of the magistrate was another delaying strategy from the state. It demonstrates that he was still consulting with the leadership of the country since the high number of the people who attended the hearing was intimidating. The union leaders were led to the court room by a tight security of over ten fully armed policemen.[1109] Also, the tight security of heavily armed policemen was not necessary since the union leaders were unarmed and not dangerous in any way. It was an intimidation strategy by the state to send a message to the workers that it was ready to use violence. The union leaders were subsequently transferred to Matsapha Central Prison following their remand at the Mankayane Court room. The transfer followed a request from the union leaders' lawyer Peter Dunseith who cited poor facilities at the Mankayane Police Station.[1110] They appeared in court again on 10 February.[1111] Their lawyer could not apply to the court for bail as, on 31 January, the Minister of Justice announced that the offence with which they were charged with was non-bailable.[1112] Clearly, the trade unionists were charged with a non-bailable as a strategy to prevent them from continuing their trade union activities including participating in the organizing of the current national stay-away. It was a strategy by the state to pacify and weaken the labour movement and cause confusion among the workers during the proposed protest action. Further, the arrest of the union leaders shows that the state was acting in bad faith. Instead of entering into negotiations with the trade union leaders over their demands the state opted to arrest them.

The arrest of the SFTU leaders did not yield the desired results for state since instead of pacifying and weakening the labour movement it made them even more determined to carry on with the mass stay-away. The remaining SFTU executive members reiterated that the stay-away was going ahead until the detained leaders were released from custody. "Nothing has changed the stay-away continues",[1113] said Barbara Dlamini after a Council meeting that was held in

[1109] SO, "Union leaders appear in court", 4 February 1997; SO, "Detained union leaders appear in court", 4 February 1997; SO, "SA govt worried by arrest of union chiefs", 4 February 1997

[1110] SO, "…are moved to Matsapha Central Prison", 4 February 1997.

[1111] SO, "Arrests and new laws a blunder?", 4 February 1997. See also Amnesty International, http://www.amnesty.org.

[1112] Amnesty International, http://www.amnesty.org

[1113] SO, "Stay-away to go on until unionists freed", 4 February 1997.

Manzini. "We urged government to come to the table and resolve the issue instead of power display",[1114] continued Barbara.

Workers in the sugar belt in the Lubombo region threatened to march to the country's jails and courts to invite arrests following the detention of their union leaders. The workers accused *Labadzala*[1115] of being involved in the arrest of their union leaders. Tens of thousands of workers insisted that the union leaders had been following the workers' mandate to press on the 27 Demands. In one of the meetings held at the respective sugar mills an employee detailed that "it is high time that we marched to the various police stations and courts in the country to demand that we be arrested together with our leaders."[1116] The workers were acting in solidarity with their union leaders and thus demonstrated a clear understanding of the idea of collective bargain. They were aware that they had the bargaining strength to put pressure on the state to release their union leaders. This was similar to the Defiance Campaign in South Africa in June 1956 during the apartheid era when non-whites decided to invite mass arrests to make the apartheid system ungovernable.

The arrest of the SFTU leaders triggered a strong response from COSATU which condemned the ill-treatment of their counterparts in Swaziland. Besides threatening to engage in an economic border blockade[1117] and to picket in the Swazi embassy in South Africa in protest against the arrest of the SFTU leaders,[1118] the federation strongly condemned this act stating:

> we are perturbed to learn that three leaders of the SFTU were arrested last night. The Swaziland government, instead of entering into genuine negotiations with SFTU on the strike demands, they have chosen to use one of their many draconian laws to arrest the three leaders. COSATU condemns the arrest of SFTU President Richard Nxumalo, SFTU General Secretary Jan Sithole and SFTU Deputy Secretary General Jabulani

[1114] SO, "Stay-away to go on until unionists freed", 4 February 1997.

[1115] National leaders.

[1116] SO, "Arrest us with our leaders", 4 February 1997.

[1117] SO, "COSATU issues threat", 3 February 1997; SO, "COSATU threatens economic blockade", 4 February 1997.

[1118] SO, "COSATU to picket SD embassy in SA", 4 February 1997.

> Nxumalo. We are calling on the Swaziland government to unconditionally release these leaders and enter into negotiations with SFTU on the demands outlined by the SFTU.[1119]

Clearly, the arrest of the trade union leaders under the Public Order Act of 1963 was a way by the state to victimize them for leading the strikes.

Trade union leaders in Swaziland also had to endure being put under house arrest. For instance, in 1997 the leader of the SFTU, Jan Sithole, was put under house arrest. A police spokesman was quoted saying "Mr Sithole is regarded as a threat to security and has been placed under armed police guard.[1120] There is clearly lack of evidence to substantiate the allegations that Mr Sithole was a threat to security. However, this was one of the strategies that were used by the state pacify and weaken the labour movement. Further, the state was using this strategy to instill fear on the workers and demonstrate to them what would happen to them if they engaged in demonstrations. The government tactics proved to be effective since Mr Sithole was worried about his safety. He was quoted saying "I don't know how they can say I am a security threat,… I am just a union leader… The government recently re-introduced provisions enabling police to hold suspects for 60 days."[1121]

In 2000, while the tripartite committee was formulating a new IRA the Swazi Government interfered at the final hurdle to limit workers' rights under the act. The state included provisions that criminalized some union activity nearly making strikes illegal and making union leaders accountable for losses during strikes.[1122] This harsh act stimulated a strong reaction from the American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organistions (AFL-CIO) which filed a petition against Swaziland under the US Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). Under pressure from international bodies and the US threatening to withdraw trade benefits the state was forced to amend and harmonise the 2000 IRA with international standards.[1123] This should

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[1119] COSATU Press Statement, 1997.

[1120] German News Agency.

[1121] German News Agency.

[1122] Solidarity Center Report, Justice for all: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Swaziland, p. 9.

[1123] Solidarity Center Report, Justice for all: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Swaziland, p. 9.

not be understood to mean the repression of workers came to an end. The state continued repress the labour movement by violating freedom of association and the workers' right to organize and bargain collectively.

In November 2008 in an effort to ban political parties but also send a stern warning to the labour movement the state signed into law the Suppression of Terrorism Act which made the life of the labour movement and pro-democracy groups more difficult. Despite the fact PUDEMO, SWAYOCO, and other political groups were proscribed as terrorist organizations trade unions were not spared since the act did not clearly define the meaning of 'terrorist act' thus, posed a constant threat to a broad spectrum of normal civil society activities.[1124] This was a direct attack on the labour movement since they were bound to align with political parties since history has proven that it is very difficult to disentangle labour from politics. It also demonstrates that the Swazi labour movement became victims of the state's repressive laws and divisive strategies. However, the Suppression of Terrorism Act did not deter the labour movement from protesting against the purchase of the King's Jet, undermining of the rule of law and harassment of judges by royal and government elites in 2008.[1125] This demonstrates that the Swazi labour movement struck back and continued to champion workers' demands despite the repressive environment that they operated within in the kingdom.

In April 2012, the Swazi Government revoked the registration of TUCOSWA. On the 4th April, 2012 the federation received a letter from the AG of Swaziland informing it of his advice to the Commissioner of Labour to de-register TUCOSWA.[1126] This was a clear violation of ILO Convention 87 which Swaziland ratified, guaranteeing freedom of association for workers and employers. Article 5 of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of

[1124] TOS, "Barney's iron fist slammed", 17 November 2008; TOS, "PM's ban on parties not gazetted!", 30 November 2008. See also, Freedom House, Swaziland: A Failed Feudal State, p. 23.

[1125] Trade Union Congress of Swaziland..., p. 73.

[1126] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

the Right to Organise recognises the right of workers' organisations to form or join federations of their own choice.[1127]

For its part, the Swazi Government's decision to rescind the registration of the TUCOSWA was purely on legal grounds. For instance, through the AG, the Swazi Government alleged "that the Federation is not a trade union organisation as envisaged by the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) and further that in any event, the Act does not provide for the registration of Federations."[1128] Muzi Mhlanga substantiates this allegation when he argues that "when the government de-registered the TUCOSWA it lied to us by saying there was a lacuna in the law."[1129] However, the same government had registered other federations, the Federation of Swaziland Employers and Chamber of Commerce (FSE-CC) and the Federation of Swaziland Business Community (FSBC) under the same IRA. Further, the same government through a letter dated 16th March, 2012, the Minister of Labour and Social Security, welcomed and congratulated the TUCOSWA for its establishment.[1130] The sudden change of heart was caused by TUCOSWA's mandate to change the existing political system in the country and adopt a more democratic system. The federation also made a pronouncement to boycott the upcoming 2013 elections since they were undemocratic.[1131] The federation resisted its de-registration. The executive wrote a letter to the Director of the ILO seeking for his intervention.[1132]

The ILO responded by sending a High-Level Fact Finding Mission to visit the kingdom in January 2014. The mission confirmed the absence of the worker and employer federations and

[1127] Observation (CEACR) – adopted 2015, published 105th ILC Session (2011): Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[1128] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[1129] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1130] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

[1131] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1132] A letter from the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) to the Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 11th April, 2012.

recommended their registration by the end of April 2014. However, the government ignored the recommendations from the ILO High-Level Fact Finding Mission and repeated calls from the international trade union movement to respect rights guaranteed under international conventions ratified by the country, in particular the ILO Convention No. 87. For instance, the General Secretary of the Industrial Global Union (IGU) Jyrki Raina urged the Swazi government "to revoke the decision to dissolve TUCOSWA…and to start engaging in a genuine dialogue with unions about legislative reforms that will ensure that workers' rights are respected in line with Swaziland's international obligations without any further delay."[1133] Despite the repeated calls to rescind its decision to de-register TUCOSWA in 2014 the Swazi Government reiterated its decision to de-register the TUCOSWA. Then Minister of Labour and Social Security, Winnie Magagula, announced a Cabinet resolution banning all federations, with immediate effect, in the country from operating.[1134] This meant that the workers' rights to associate freely and to carry out trade union activities were completely suspended.

Between June 2013 and June 2014 the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards noted with grave concern the discussions which took place in the Conference Committee in particular "with regards to the revocation of the registration of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) by the Government and the denial of its right to fully exercise its trade union rights."[1135] The Committee "strongly urged the Government to immediately take the necessary steps to ensure that …all the social partners in the country to be recognised and registered under the law, in full conformity with the Convention."[1136] Consequently, the Committee called on the Swazi government to accept a High-Level ILO Fact Finding mission to assess on the ground the progress made on pending matters, including the steps taken to amend the IRA to enable the

[1133] TOS, "Swaziland Bans Trade Unions", 17 October, 2014; see also Letter from ITUC-Africa to Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 10th October, 2014.

[1134] TOS, Swaziland Bans Trade Unions, 17 October, 2014.

[1135] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, May-June 2014). See also, Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, June 2013).

[1136] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, June 2013).

registration of federations and the actual registration of TUCOSWA.[1137] However, despite the advice and comments of the Conference Committee in June 2013 there were no changes in the comments made by the Committee in May and June 2014. For instance, the Committee noted "with concern the Government's recent press statement No.12/2014 issued in October 2014 according to which, pending the amendment of the IRA by parliament, all federations should stop operating immediately. All memberships of the federations in statutory boards were also terminated."[1138] During the discussions the Swazi government promised that it was ready to handle applications for registration so that freedom of association is fully implemented in the country. The Committee noted the Government's statement but hoped for the immediate registration and recognition of the TUCOSWA and other federations[1139] upon the presentation of their applications in the country to fully comply with Articles 2, 3 and 5 of the Convention.[1140]

On 31 July, 2012 the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) took the issue of the revocation of the registration of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland to the ILO Conference Committee. Amongst other things the Committee learnt about the allegations of continued repression of trade union activities and reports of police brutality and harassment against trade unionists including trade union leaders of the SFTU, the SFL, and the SNAT, and the arrest and expulsion of officials from the COSATU.[1141] The Committee further noted comments dated 29 August and 25 September 2012 from the TUCOSWA on the implementation of the ILO Convention No. 87, on the exercise of trade union activities in the country under a repressive and tense atmosphere and without any meaningful social dialogue, and on the non-recognition and purported de-registration of TUCOSWA by the Swazi government. Due to the continued and long-standing comments from national and international trade unions on the exercise of trade

[1137] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, June 2013).

[1138] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, May-June 2014).

[1139] The Conference Committee had urged the Government register the federations without delay.

[1140] Follow-up to the discussion of the Committee on the Application of Standards (International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, May-June 2014).

[1141] Observation (CEACR) – Adopted 2012 published 102nd ILC session (2013) – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

union rights in the country, the Committee firmly recalled that the rights of workers' and employers' organisations can only be exercised in a climate that is free from violence, pressure or threats of any kind against the leaders and members of these organisations. The Committee then urged the Swazi government to ensure that this principle was respected and requested it to respond to the serious allegations of the ITUC and TUCOSWA. The Committee continued; "…recalling that Article 5 of the Convention recognises the right of workers' organi[s]ations to establish or join federations and confederations of their own choosing, the Committee requests the Government to take all the necessary steps to proceed to the registration of TUCOSWA, including legislative measures if necessary."[1142]

On 10th October, 2014 the ITUC-Africa[1143] wrote to the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland protesting against the state's planned dissolution of the TUCOSWA and the ATUSWA. The letter reads:

> ITUC-Africa strongly condemns your plans to dissolve the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) and the Amalgamated Trade Unions of Swaziland (ATUSWA). This development is coming on the heels of several complaints we have made in recent times concerning the need for the Swaziland Government to engender, as well as create genuine spaces for the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. We have been informed that the Minister of Labour and Social Security, Winnie Magagula, …announced a Cabinet resolution deciding that pending legal reforms all federations should stop operating immediately… Article 5 of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association recognises the right of workers' organisations to establish or join federations or confederations of their own choosing. In response to complaint filed by TUCOSWA and the ITUC on 23 may 2012 (case No. 2949), the Committee on Freedom of Association recommended that pending legislative reforms TUCOSWA is able to effectively exercise its trade union rights without interference or reprisal. An ILO High Level Fact Finding Mission that visited the country in January 2014 and recommended the registration of the worker and employer federations by end of April 2014. Your government has completely ignored these recommendations as well as repeated calls from the international trade union movement to respect rights guaranteed under international conventions ratified by Swaziland, in particular ILO

[1142] Observation (CEACR) – Adopted 2102, published 102nd ILC session (2013) – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

[1143] ITUC-Africa is an African Organisation representing over 17 million workers in 49 African countries, including Swaziland.

> Convention No. 87. …we are shocked that you even argue that your actions are required by the ILO, nothing could be more cynical and farther from the truth…we urge you to revoke the decision to dissolve TUCOSWA and ATUSWA and to start engaging in a genuine dialogue with unions about legislative reforms that will ensure that workers' rights are respected in line with Swaziland's international obligations without any further delay.[1144]

By revoking the registration of TUCOSWA the Swazi Government clearly violated Article 5 of ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association. Aware of the threat posed by the TUCOSWA the Swazi government de-registered the federation. The government was unwilling to tolerate the existence of an autonomous federation that could challenge its authority and provide an alternative supply of political opposition. To deal with the impasse of its de-registration the TUCOSWA sought the support of the ITUC-Africa. As Mpfariseni Budeli argues, "trade unions allied with human rights organisations … and demanded democracy and respect for human rights."[1145] Similarly, the Swazi labour movement allied with ITUC-Africa to challenge its de-registration by the government of Swaziland.

Locally, the TUCOSWA also protested its de-registration. For instance, the federation pulled out of the tripartite bodies such as the Wages Council, the Labour Advisory Board (LAB), the Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration Commission (CMAC), the Swaziland National Provident Fund (SNPF), the Training and Localisation Committee (TLC) and the Social Dialogue Committee (SDC) to make things unworkable.[1146]

The TUCOSWA also built an alliance with Solidarity Center as a strategy to fight its de-registration by the Swazi government. The Solidarity Center was working with trade union federations in Africa and internationally to build solidarity and fight for workers' rights. The Solidarity Center also helped to mobilise labour solidarity in Africa and internationally to help the TUCOSWA to exercise its right to Freedom of Association and protect its leadership

[1144] Letter from ITUC-Africa to Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 10th October, 2014.

[1145] Budeli, "Trade unionism and politics in Africa…", p. 8.

[1146] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

from government attacks. It also urged the Swazi government to protect freedom of association, register the TUCOSWA and cease attacks on the federation's leadership.[1147]

A fact-finding mission conducted by the ITUC between the 14th and 16th May 2015 found that the use of repressive legislation by the police against lawful trade union activities was still not addressed by Parliament. In particular, the 1963 Public Order Act which still in place to repress lawful and peaceful protests.[1148] The ITUC was also disappointed that the Ministry of labour and Social Security could not give guarantees that trade union meetings would not be dispersed by the police through brutal force in the future. The ITUC pledged to step up its advocacy for a transition to democracy and the respect of basic workers' rights by organising workers world-wide. The confederation also promised to report these findings to the ILO and the Members of the European Parliament who will deliberate on the issue of violation of human and workers' rights.[1149]

Besides banning federations the state also applied the 'no work no pay' rule to suppress the activities of the labour movement. In July 2007 the labour movement was engaged in a general strike led by the SFTU, SFL and SNAT demanding ending the taxing of workers' benefits, introducing multi-party elections in 2008, and regime transition. The state responded by ordering the workers not to demonstrate, but rather lobby the parliament, since only parliament had the power to change the constitution to allow multi-party elections. On 2 August 2007, the labour movement threatened further strikes if the government was not willing to listen to its demands. The unions further raised labour issues, adding to their political demands.[1150] In an effort to diffuse and pacify the strike the government announced at the eleventh hour that it will apply the 'no work no pay rule'[1151] despite that the strike was legal.[1152] The state was applying

[1147] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, Manzini, 26 January 2019.

[1148] Main Findings of the ITUC Solidarity Visit to Swaziland, 15 May, 2015.

[1149] Main Findings of the ITUC Solidarity Visit to Swaziland, 15 May, 2015.

[1150] http://www.wikipedia, 2007 General Strike, 14 August, 2018. See also, TOS, "PUDEMO members urged to join strike", 25 July 2007; TOS, "NNLC Women's League pledges its support", 25 July 2007.

[1151] TOS, "Report to work today, or face the music - govt", 25 July 2007

its divisive strategy since such a statement was a calculated move to instill fear among workers and probably influence some workers not to attend the protest action. The government also promised the workers that it will be vigilant in ensuring that peace and stability is maintained.[1153] Vigilant in this case means using violence and force on the strikers. Again, this was another divisive strategy aimed at reducing the bargaining strength of the labour movement since some workers would be afraid of police brutality and thus opt to stay at home instead of attending the protest action.

The state also used the courts to avert strikes at the eleventh hour. For instance, the 1997 strike that was called for Monday and Tuesday in Mbabane and Manzini, was banned by a court order obtained by the government late on Sunday.[1154] This was one of the repressive tactics used the government to cause confusion among the workers at the eleventh hour. It was common practice in post-colonial Swaziland for the state to use the courts to stop legal strikes.

The labour movement fought back and challenged the state on its abuse of the law. For instance, the right to protest against government's decision to cut salaries of civil servants on 28th July, 2011 was won just a day before following a court order which overruled a government order that would have averted the strike.[1155] This indicates that the state also used the courts to prevent workers from staging protests. On 19 July 2012, the Industrial Court of Swaziland ruled that the strike was illegal and the government won an interdict against the strike from a government appointed judge. Following the strike ban, SDNU nurses returned to work but engaged in a passive strike. However, the large majority of teachers continued to strike despite the court ruling, enduring salary cuts for two months following the government's 'no work no pay rule'. On 24 July, the state issued a mandate for teachers to return to work. Many teachers returned to the classroom but did not teach. The next day, nearly 3,000 teachers were engaged in a protest

[1152] TOS, "Fear not, this is a legal action- SFTU", 25 July 2007

[1153] TOS, "Report to work today, or face the music - govt", 25 July 2007

[1154] Interview with Muzi Mhlanga, 26 January 2019.

[1155] Letter from Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa to Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, 30th August, 2011.

march. The government ordered the Swaziland's Teaching Service Commission (TSC) to fire any teacher participating in or planning to join the strike. Starting on 1 August, the TSC began firing hundreds of teachers, including all SNAT executive members, who then suspended the strike to regroup and discuss a way forward.[1156] The mass firing of the teachers was a strategy by the state to weaken and cause widespread confusion among the teachers. Indeed, the strategy worked for the state since the SNAT executive was forced to call off the indefinite strike under unclear circumstances. Hit hard economically by salary cuts and loss of jobs many teachers abandoned the strike and returned to work in mid-August. Notably, there was no official order from SNAT to call off the strike, but in the face of repression and economic hardship, the strike died out over the month of August. By September, fired teachers had been reinstated by the government. Although the strike was ended, the onslaught on the state by the teachers was clear for everyone to see. In spite of this onslaught, the teachers had made their statement of intent that they were ready to die in order to have their demands met. According to Sibongile Mazibuko, the mass firing of teachers caused a lot strain on both the teachers themselves and the union's executive. She argues that "she never slept for four consecutive days because I received calls from teachers informing me of their dismissals. As a leader I had to attend them day and night yet I was also dismissed myself. That's what people do when you're a leader. They expect you to provide a solution to their problems when you are also faced with a similar problem."[1157]

In 2014, the state used the law to arrest Thulani Maseko, the TUCOSWA's lawyer, for a lengthy period prompting the attention of the ILO Conference Committee and ITUC who both demanded his release from prison. Maseko was arrested for defending the de-registration of the TUCOSWA. The Conference Committee requested the immediate and unconditional release of Mr Maseko. The Committee further urged the Swazi government to provide it with an update on the issue.[1158] This demonstrates that the abused its powers and arrested a human rights lawyer who was defending challenging the decision to revoke the registration of TUCOSWA.

[1156] Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swazi Teachers Strike for Economic Justice, 2012.

[1157] Interview with Sibongile Mazibuko, 7 February, 2019.

[1158] Observation (CEACR) – Adopted 2013, published 103rd ILC session (2014) – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Eswatini (Ratification: 1978).

Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated that the Swazi labour movement's activities prompted a strong reaction from the Swazi state. Between 1939 and 2014 the state responded in various ways to repress, weaken and pacify the labour movement. The Swazi labour movement had to contend with operating in an environment of repressive laws, hostile government attitudes and state sponsored violence. During this period workers including trade union leaders were victimized, harassed, tortured, murdered, banned, arrested and brutalised in many ways. In spite of the repression, victimization and brutality that Swazi workers suffered at the hands of the state the labour movement did not lose its identity, dignity and manhood. It continued to carry on with the workers' struggle for improved conditions and adopted various strategies to insulate itself from the suffering it received from the state. In the final analysis the Swazi labour movement emerged as a resilient force that sought to champion the demands of the workers despite the state repression throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.

CONCLUSION

The study examined how the Swazi labour movement developed and evolved over time from 1939 to 2014. It has chronologically and thematically traced the trajectory of the Swazi labour movement, all its variant forms and periods, from the colonial to the post-colonial period. The main thesis of the study has been to demonstrate that the Swazi labour movement and all its predecessor forms of worker organization historically emerged as a consequence of a number of socio-economic, political and legal factors. Despite that the labour movement in Swaziland has faced a myriad of challenges that tested its unity and sustainability it survived and adapted in these challenges.

The thesis offers a new contribution in the historiography of Swazi labour history. A major contribution of this research has been to provide a holistic understanding of how the Swazi labour movement developed and evolved over time. This contribution has been realised by drawing on Marxist, labour movement unionism and social movement theories to illuminate the dynamics of Swazi labour in its evolution. The theoretical approaches employed in this study underpin the trajectory of the Swazi labour movement from the view points and experiences of the workers themselves. This is particularly important because the labour movement in Swaziland has continually played a meaningful role in the struggles of the oppressed and exploited work force. However, in the absence of a documented history that bears testimony to the role that the labour movement has played in Swaziland, there is great danger of this history being lost. The thesis has illustrated how the Swazi labour movement created its own history and shaped its destiny despite the myriad of challenges it faced from employers and the state. This research has proved that the Swazi labour movement was capable of winning concessions for the workers as well as influencing the state on policy matters. This was done against the background of a many of challenges that the labour movement was confronted with since its emergence. The historical development that the labour movement underwent was greatly affected by the political, socio-economic dynamics, which to some extent explains the repressive environment in which the movement existed continually shaped its character. The expansion of the Swazi economy, the growth in the workforce due to the growth in investment and production together with poor working and living conditions and low wages and the political developments

of the anti-colonial struggles in the Southern African region and beyond, and the emergence of Pan-Africanism in Africa, were contributing factors to the development of the labour movement in Swaziland.

This research began by tracing the historical background of paid labour and capital penetration in Swaziland. The advent of paid labour through capital penetration in Swaziland was due to the British policy in the colony. The British introduced an economic system which transformed the country into a producer of raw materials and a market for British industrial products. This largely resonates with the British colonial policy throughout the African continent. The study confirms the old argument that Swaziland's economy was changed primarily into exporting raw materials whose profits and pricing was determined by the metropole industries. These economic changes were a direct result of the war which expedited the production process in both human resource and raw materials. The economic changes marked the beginning of the conflict between labour and capital since Swazi labour worked hard to improve the working and living conditions and wages while employers worked very hard to minimize costs and maximize profits.

The advent of capitalism in Swaziland shaped the development and growth of a Swazi labour movement. The capital penetration that took place in Swaziland from 1939 onwards led to a very strong demand for local labour which in turn transformed the character of the working class and eventually led to the development of a Swazi labour movement. As a result, in the 1940s Britain began to give outright grants to her colonies through the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, the Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) and the Colonial Development Cooperation (CDC). CDC became one of the British corporations which spearheaded the development of industries in Swaziland during and after 1945. The study confirms Hamilton Simelane's argument that the economic changes that took place in Swaziland after the war should be conceptualized within the broader framework of changes in the economies of the metropole countries. The establishment of industries in Swaziland was part of the changing British colonial policy in Africa during and after the war. The British government through CDC and the Overseas Development Act of 1948 sought to stimulate economic development in Swaziland.

Between 1938 and 1960 a number of industries were established in Swaziland through the support of the CDC.

Between the 1940s and 1960s procurement of Swazi labour was a big challenge for the country's major companies which found it difficult to recruit Swazis and were immediately faced with a labour shortage. Two reasons were responsible for this labour shortage. First, during this period most Swazis had entered into wage labour as thousands of Swazi men and women were already employed in the South African mines. Even locally thousands of Swazi men, women and children were engaged in wage labour. Local companies had to compete for the remaining Swazi labour amongst themselves. Like labour elsewhere in the Southern African region, Swazi labour made critical assessment of wages and working conditions in the different parts of the labour market and carefully chose South African companies ahead of local companies. Second, Swazi labour was not yet fully proletarianised during this period. Swazi workers could easily withdraw their labour when conditions were unbearable while the reward was insufficient. Most Swazis had no economic compulsion to enter into wage labour during this period and preferred remaining in their village where they enjoyed a degree of autonomy. This withdrawal of labour by the workers led to serious labour shortages among local companies.

In response to labour shortages, local companies adopted several strategies which, however, proved to be unsuccessful. Labour migrants from the southern African region were imported to solve the problem of shortage of labour. Local companies also connived with the Swazi traditional leadership to improve their recruitment efforts. Chief Recruiting Officers were allowed to carry out propaganda campaigns all over the country's chiefs' kraals. In an effort to use culture in an ideological and traditional power politics to exert control over the working class King Sobhuza II motivated Swazis to work for local companies. The state also appointed a Labour Officer to improve the recruitment process. Despite these recruitment efforts local companies continued to face labour shortages. Consequently, wage increments were used to lure local labour. Despite these wage increments Europeans earned far more compared to Africans. The huge wage disparity between Africans and Europeans caused problems for local companies in the early 1960s. Local companies also tried to use very high cash advances to lure Swazi labour. However, cash advances only benefited employers not recruited persons. It only helped

employers tie down workers for a period of time. Although cash advances slightly increased the number of recruited persons this recruitment effort failed to ultimately solve the problem of shortage of labour. The study confirms the argument raised by erliest scholars that shortage of labour and recruitment strategies shaped the character of the working class and led to the development of worker consciousness which eventually led to the development of a Swazi labour movement.

The study argues that worker consciousness was a precursor to the development of the Swazi labour movement. Poor working and living conditions as well as low wages developed and shaped consciousness among Swazi workers between 1939 and 1954. The manifestation of worker consciousness in Swaziland took a different approach from the normal trend of individual strategies. Between 1939 and 1944, Swazi and African workers at the Havelock Asbestos Mine demonstrated a developed level of worker consciousness. Un-unionised and embryonic Swazi and other African workers partially withdrew their labour en masse and engaged in strike action. This was a departure from the trend of expressing consciousness through individual forms of labour withdrawal by workers who have just entered into wage labour. In most parts of the region workers who had just entred into wage labour tended to express their consciousness through early forms of individual labour withdrawal. Elsewhere in Swaziland, this form of worker consciousness was prevalent among un-unionised workers. Further, the strikes at Havelock mine were a rejection of the widely held view that only trade unions and worker associations were capable of organizing strikes. Despite that between 1939 and 1944 there were no trade unions in Swaziland, Swazi and African workers at Havelock Mine demonstrated group consciousness. This proves that group consciousness developed in the absence of trade unions, a very rare occurrence in the history of labour. The compound system which was intended to control and repress workers facilitated a developed level of worker consciousness because the workers shared their grievances and solutions on how to end their exploitation. Swazi and African labour exploited the compounds to their advantage and successfully mobilized each other to withdraw their labour en masse. Poor living conditions were at the root of the strikes. Further, through these strikes Swazi labour demonstrated that they were now semi-proletarianised. Swazi workers aware that remuneration was high at Havelock Asbestos Mine

compared to other local companies decided to stay at the company and improve their welfare instead of completely withdrawing their labour by leaving the company.

Between 1948 and 1954 worker consciousness in Swaziland primarily manifested itself in early individual forms of labour withdrawal. Early individual forms of labour were divided into complete and partial which employers interpreted to mean 'desertion' and 'loafing', 'absenteeism', and 'laziness'. These were strategies which workers insulated themselves with to deal with exploitation at the work place. Complete individual withdrawal of labour was the most common form of labour withdrawal among Swazi workers during this period, particularly in protest against unfavourable working and living conditions and low wages. Complete individual labour withdrawal led to labour shortages and decreased production levels for local companies. The study challenges the argument by earliest scholars that African workers did not exhibit any consciousness before the advent of trade unionism in Africa. It argues that workers exhibited consciousness in a number of ways and strategies only understood by the workers themselves with or without workers' associations or trade unions. The study, therefore, proves that Swazi workers demonstrated consciousness in the absence of worker organizations and stresses that early worker consciousness was a precursor to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

From the mid-1950s to the early 1960s worker consciousness evolved from early individual forms of labour withdrawal to individually placing complaints to the new structures that were imposed to listen to workers' grievances. The imposition of worker representatives to deal with workers' grievances of a petty nature gave rise to a new expression of worker consciousness in Swaziland. Instead of withdrawing their labour when conditions proved to be unfavourable Swazi workers decided to exploit the imposed structures and place their grievances. During this period Swazi workers exploited the available structures by individually appealing arbitrary and unfair dismissals and reporting ill-treatment and racial abuse at the hands of the local companies. Swazi workers demonstrated awareness of their status and rights as workers and found strategies to adapt to the exploitation that they were exposed to. They were very quick to exploit the same structures that were meant to repress them and challenged unfair treatment by individually placing all sorts of grievances to these structures. However, these imposed worker representatives were ineffective since they failed to resolve workers' grievances because they

represented the interests of the company, state and monarchy not those of the workers. These structures were meant to pacify group solidarity and collective bargaining among workers.

Remarkably, the exploitation of the imposed worker representatives did not mark the complete disappearance of early forms of individual labour withdrawal during this period. Some workers still resorted to complete individual labour withdrawal. Since the worker representatives could not satisfy workers this led to the marginalisation of workers' interests. Most importantly, this is more than just the persistence of early forms of worker consciousness but a combination of strategies which indicate worker interests and aspirations. As the workers appealed to these structures for help, it became clear that these structures were not effective in redressing their grievances. Ultimately, the unworkability of these structures also raised awareness among workers to realize the need to develop group solidarity and to collectively organise and bargain in order to end their exploitation which in turn led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

Failure by the imposed worker representatives to satisfactorily redress workers' grievances led to the birth of trade unionism. The birth of trade unionism in the country against the background of anti-trade unionism and nationalist politics reflected a developed level of worker consciousness and solidarity both of which were largely absent in Swaziland in the preceding years. The growth and character of the workforce under different conditions and hurdles and the failure of the imposed worker representation system to satisfactorily redress workers' grievances led to the rise of trade unionism in Swaziland. The rise of trade unionism ultimately led to the development of the Swazi labour movement.

The embryonic trade unions orchestrated successful strikes in which nearly all African workers participated, securing concessions from indifferent companies. The 1962 African workers' strike at Usuthu Pulp marked a new era of worker consciousness and also symbolized heightened awareness among Swazi workers. It demonstrated that Swazi and other African workers would unite regardless of their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to articulate their grievances to the employer, and ultimately withdraw their labour en masse in order to force the company to redress their grievances. The 1962 Usuthu Pulp strike triggered more labour protests which led

to unrest in the country in 1963. The unrest was caused by old unresolved grievances which still persisted in 1963 much to the disgruntlement of the workers. Persistent low wages, poor housing and sanitary conditions, arbitrary and unfair dismissals, lack of apprenticeship opportunities and the dearth of promotion opportunities, bad food, racial discrimination and unpaid overtime had caused so much dissatisfaction among the workers which they wanted to end. The 1963 wildcat strikes emphasized that Swazi trade unionism had been born. The 1963 unrest impacted negatively on the traditional system which ultimately resulted to the banning of political parties and the repression of trade unions in 1973.

The attainment of independence in 1968 did not improve the situation for workers since their conditions virtually remained the same if not worse in the post-colonial period. In the post-colonial period, the character of the Swazi state changed completely from that of the colonial state. In Swaziland the transition from multi-party democracy to 'non-party' state followed a trend in post-colonial Africa which saw most states transform to one-party states and authoritarian and military regimes. The emergence of a 'non-party' state in post-colonial Swaziland five years after the attainment of independence ended the multi-party democracy that was established by the British at independence. INM's victory in the 1964 and 1967 elections secured the transfer of power from the British to the traditionalists, a rare occurrence in the history of decolonization in Africa. After the traditionalists had finally secured power, the progressives including the labour movement were marginalized and the British efforts to lead a transition towards multi-party democracy was quickly defused. The traditionalists despised the western democratic style of leadership and pan-Africanism which the labour movement and radicals/progressives favoured. They were therefore viewed as a threat by the traditionalists to their governance of the country in the post-independence period.

In much of post-colonial Swaziland, the Swazi traditionalists introduced a series of repressive laws that sought to maintain political domination. Members of the opposition were subjected to detention without trial and meetings of more than 4 people were not allowed. The establishment of the *Tinkhundla* system of traditional rule in 1978 that rooted monarchical dictatorship suppressed the labour movement and other progressive groups.

The repeal of the Westminster Constitution did not change the plight of Swazi workers in post-independence Swaziland. The massive presence of South African capital was one of the major contributing factors in keeping the main features of the apartheid workplace regime in post-colonial Swazi workplaces. Further, wages for Swazi workers remained very low. The labour movement expressed the dissatisfaction of Swazi workers. The traditionalists made it clear that they were unsympathetic to labour demands and the government proved generally hostile towards the labour movement. Thus, despite that most trade unions managed to gain recognition in many companies and challenged the works council system, threats to their efficiency swarmed. King Sobhuza II had made it clear that he disliked the labour movement since it tended to develop along sinister lines instead of sticking to bread and butter issues.

The centralized 'non-party' *Tinkhundla* state tended to view the labour movement as a threat to its hegemony. Despite that the labour movement was repressed alongside political parties it was able to strike back and continued to fight for workers' rights and improved working and living conditions and wages. Resistance to the *Tinkhundla* system of government from the labour movement became profound in the mid-1990s. The labour movement openly criticized and condemned both the 1973 Decree and the *Tinkhundla* system throughout post-colonial Swaziland despite widespread state repression and violation of human rights. This demonstrates a working class wrestling with a myriad ochallenges trying to communicate their feelings and needs the only way they knew how, through labour protests.

The Swazi labour movement evolved with the formation of the SFTU in 1971 and influenced government policies. Although the SFTU faced challenges from both employers and the state it was very instrumental in working for workers' rights and recognition both locally and internationally. In 1975 under pressure from the SFTU Swaziland became a member of ILO and began ratifying a number of ILO Conventions. In 1977, the country was mandated by ILO to bring its labour legislations in line with international labour standards and then localize the industrial relations law, and guaranteed freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. The LAB gave birth to the Employment and Industrial Relations Acts of 1980 which were later passed into law on 28 September 1980. The LAB further facilitated the establishment of the Labour Court called the Industrial Court today.

The SFTU aligned with international organisations such as ICFTU, OATUU and COSATU. These links helped the SFTU to profile the Swazi case internationally and won support for the labour movement's struggle to force the government of Swaziland to ratify the ILO conventions. Further, the SFTU managed to engage these international organisations to report the country to ILO on violation of workers' rights in the country. This forced the country to adhere to ILO conventions and practices. Locally, the SFTU assigned trade unions to capacitate their members on labour laws. The Workers Education Department at the ILO and OATUU helped in educating members on basic trade unionism. The programmes run by these organisations bore fruits in 1983 as a number of trade unions were formed and registered. These unions strengthened the SFTU, which was then about a 10 years old.

Despite the huge strides taken by the SFTU during its formative years, it was soon shaken by internal problems. In 1992, six unions that formed the SFTU split from the federation to form the SFL. The split was caused by problems bothering on the limitations of the leadership of the SFTU. Despite the obvious internal challenges the split was also caused by a third force since there were elements of state interference in the split. The state applied its strategy of divide and rule and attempted to weaken the labour movement by influencing some unions to split from the SFTU and form the SFL. The split demonstrates the dynamics of labour. It shows that Swazi labour was differentiated and not a monolithic entity that behaved uniformly.

The challenges faced by SFTU did not deter the federation from confronting problems faced by workers in much of post-colonial Swaziland and championing workers' demands and rights. Although the success of the federation is yet to be proven, the SFTU has been viewed by many as an effective national and international player that successfully carried the hopes and aspirations of the labour movement. Against the background and atmosphere of 'non-party' state the Swazi labour movement grew in dissatisfaction and frustration. Trade unions, although not banned through the king's proclamation, were closely monitored and if they refused to toe the line they were to be banned. Mostly through the SFTU and SNAT, the labour movement challenged the imposition of 'a non-party' state since they were aware that it influenced the outcome of wages and working and living conditions. Working and living conditions remained poor and the standards of living deteriorated as wages for workers did not improve in post-

colonial Swaziland. The SFTU and SNAT organised a number of strikes demanding improved working and living conditions and wages. Further, the labour movement also had a political dispensation about the country and demanded transition from 'non-party' state to multi-party democracy. Consequently, the centralized 'non-party' *Tinkhundla* state viewed the labour movement as a threat to its hegemony. When the labour movement got involved in politics it became unpopular with the *Tinkhundla* regime.

In the 1990s, the role of the labour movement went beyond addressing bread and butter issues to wider political issues. It formed a very strong alliance with the banned political parties. This alliance was made possible by a common belief that the notion of a 'non-party' state in Swaziland was an illusion because the policies of the state drew a lot from the philosophy of the Imbokodvo National Movement. The labour movement's militancy was demonstrated in the popular 27 Demands which sought to address grievances of almost all sectors of society comprising trade union members, bus operators, police, vendors and orphans, vulnerable and old people. The government's failure to address the workers' demands in the March 1995 campaign led to militant protest actions. The SFTU organised a protest action leading to the stepping down of then Prime Minister, Prince Mbilini Dlamini.

Whereas the 27 Demands sought to redress poor working and living conditions and low wages, a salient aspect about them was their political content. The demands depicted clearly that the labour movement was pursuing a political agenda. The political demands included the repeal of the 1973 Decree and unbanning of political parties and the introduction of freedom of speech and association. By demanding the government to re-institute democratic structures the labour movement was challenging the state to replace the imposed 'non-party' state *Tinkhundla* system with multi-party democracy. However, Swazi workers were divided on the labour movement's involvement in politics. Some workers were against the political demands and wanted the SFTU to focus on labour issues and strongly believed that it would automatically lead to regime transition. The study argues that some union members did not align with the organisation's political ideologies and solely joined because of labour reasons. Other workers, however, strongly believed that labour and politics are intertwined. This is a clear demonstration of the dynamics of labour and shows that the Swazi labour movement was not a monolithic entity.

Through its demands, the labour movement was able to influence the direction of government policies. The government was forced to agree to a list of demands centred on redrafting of the out-dated 1963 labour legislation, the repeal of the 1973 Decree and an undertaking from the government to reinstitute democratic structures. Although the government promised substantial reforms it failed to implement democratic reforms. This led to militant protest action from the labour movement depleting the country's economy millions through loss of production and damaged property. Failure to achieve success in repealing the 1973 Decree and democratise the country motivated the SFTU to strengthen calls for democracy, arguing that reform could not take place in a repressive climate. Hitherto, the SFTU had deliberately avoided political issues, since the government only reluctantly allowed trade union activity as long as political issues remained outside their mandate. The labour movement was able to influence direction on government policies. Following protest action in 1997, King Mswati III initiated a constitutional reform process, apparently to respond to the widespread call for the lifting of the state of emergency in place since 1973 and denial of freedom of political association and assembly.

In the new millennium as the country's fiscal challenges reached a climax, the labour movement struck back and fiercely protested. In 2007, the labour movement was engaged in a general strike led by the SFTU, SFL and SNAT. These unions increased the demand for introducing multi-party elections in 2008. Remarkably, the demonstrations constituted Swaziland's biggest civil movement for over a decade, since the last large-scale protests in the mid-1990s with tens of thousands of workers demonstrating on the streets. The strike attracted interest from political parties such as PUDEMO and the NNLC which encouraged its members to fully participate in the strike.

The 2007 workers' protests stimulated a strong response from the state. In November 2008 the state signed into law the Suppression of Terrorism Act which worsened the situation of pro-democracy groups in the country. Despite that political groups were proscribed as terrorist organizations the labour movement was not spared since the act did not clearly define the meaning of 'terrorist act' posing a persistent threat to many civil society activities. This act criminalized any person or group found to be giving support to the banned organisations.

The Suppression of Terrorism Act did not deter the workers from engaging in protest action to champion their demands. In 2008, for instance, the labour movement protested against the purchase of the King's Jet, undermining of the rule of law and harassment of judges by royal and government elites. This demonstrates that the Swazi labour movement was determined to challenge the state and force it to agree to the workers' demands in spite of the act which also posed a danger to the labour movement.

The Swazi labour movement had to grapple with operating in an environment of repressive laws, hostile government attitudes and state sponsored violence. Workers including trade union leaders were victimized in many ways. Physical brutalisation and victimization of workers through repressive laws, anti-union attitudes and state sponsored violence in post-colonial Swaziland did not deter the labour movement from fighting for workers' rights. In the final analysis, the Swazi labour movement emerged as a significant opponent of the 'non-party' state that has characterized much of post-colonial Swaziland. The labour movement was central to the widespread challenges to the authoritarian state in much of post-independence Swaziland. Like all African governments elsewhere, the Swazi Government was uncomfortable with the strong, radical, independent Swazi labour movement.

The study also explored the relationship between labour and pro-democracy politics in post-colonial Swaziland. The findings are that the relationship between labour and politics has been complex, since it has been both collaborative and conflicting. The Swazi labour movement, like labour movements elsewhere, played a prominent role in the pro-democracy struggles in post-colonial Swaziland. The death of embryonic multi-party democracy in 1973 together with anti-union attitude by the state and employers gave the impetus for the alliance between labour and pro-democracy political groupings in post-colonial Swaziland. Consequently, the Swazi labour movement emerged as a significant opponent of the 'non-party' state that has characterised much of post-colonial Swaziland. The Swazi labour movement has provided a constant source of discomfort for the *Tinkhundla* regime as they represented an independent power base and held an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in Swazi civil society.

The study has demonstrated, also, that in spite of the dominant trend of alliance between labour and pro-democracy political groupings there were often conflicts between labour and pro-democracy politics. These conflicts are well demonstrated in the different views of the workers on the pro-democracy agenda. Some workers wanted to retain a considerable autonomy from political parties and avoid meddling with national politics. Labour unions in Swaziland have never been necessarily surrogate political parties. The diverse views on the pro-democracy agenda demonstrate that workers are not a homogenous entity since their participation in either unions or politics was informed by different reasons. The Swazi labour movement, like other labour movements elsewhere, remains critical for democratic transition and will continue to play a prominent role in this process. In spite of this political role, the labour movement harbours to retain a considerable autonomy from political parties. While this hints to a possible divorce the study concludes by arguing that the experience of the Swazi labour movement has demonstrated it remains difficult to disentangle labour from politics.

Although the Swazi labour movement has played a critical role, like other labour movements from the region and beyond, conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, Swazi labour unlike labour from South Africa, Egypt and Senegal, has never played a subordinate role to the national liberation movement in the post-colonial period. Secondly, Swazi labour, like labour elsewhere, has provided a constant source of discomfort for the 'non-party' state as it represents an independent power base and holds an unrivalled capacity for political mobilisation in Swazi civil society. However, unlike in Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Swazi labour movement did not form an opposition party to dethrone the *Tinkhundla* regime. Finally, while African labour in Zambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Southern Africa, won the struggle for democracy the Swazi labour movement has yet to taste that success. Despite the failure to achieve this success the study concludes that the issues of democratisation in the kingdom remain a time ticking bomb.

The Swazi labour movement was successful in achieving some of its aims. It has gradually improved the working and living conditions of workers over the past years. Through efforts from the labour movement the ILO found out about the ill-treatment and violation of workers' rights in the kingdom and subsequently put pressure on the Swazi Government to respect human

rights and align labour laws with those of the ILO. The Swazi labour movement was successful in achieving some of the 27 Demands. These include celebrating Workers' Day on May 1 every year and the payment of the elderly grants. The Swazi labour movement successfully resisted the proposed 10 per cent salary cuts from the government in 2012. Despite failing to force the government to re-introduce multi-party democracy the Swazi labour movement was successful in conscientising and mobilising the Swazi civil society for the pro-democracy agenda. Subsequently, despite widespread state repression and physical brutality the issue of democracy is still simmering among Swazis and is a time ticking bomb. The 2012 *Sibaya* demonstrated the extent to which pro-democracy agenda has been successful because Swazis unanymously criticised the *Tinkhundla* system and called for the introduction of multi-party democracy. In essence, the labour movement has become a driving force behind the process of mobilisation for more essential socio-economic changes in Swaziland.

Notwistanding the effort made to present a comprehensive study, a longitudinal study of this nature cannot be completely exhaustive. In view of the findings of the study, the following possible new research avenues are proposed that might stimulate scholarly interest for further inquiry. These hinge on (i) Conflict within the trade union movement, 1971-2012; (ii) Serving the union or political parties: SNAT, 1980-2012 and (iii) The life and times of a trade unionist: the Biography of Jan Sithole.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Please tell me about the working conditions in the companies you worked for.
2. What did you and other workers do when working conditions proved to be unbearable?
3. Were you satisfied with the wages you were paid for the job that you were doing? If not, what did you and other workers do?
4. Were you accommodated by the company? If yes, how were the conditions in the company houses?
5. How were workers accommodated in the compounds?
6. How was life like in the compounds? What did you and other workers engage in after work?
7. What kind of discussions did workers have in the compounds?
8. How was the treatment you received from the compound police and how did you and other workers react to the treatment?
9. Were you happy with the rules in the compounds? If not, what did you and other workers do?
10. Were workers generally happy with the role of workers' councils?
11. Were you a member of a trade union?
12. Trade unionism emerged in 1962 in Swaziland despite that trade unions were eligible since 1942. What reasons can you give for this?
13. Were you ever involved in strike action that was organised by a trade union? If yes, what was the strike about?
14. What were the achievements of the trade union you joined?
15. What were the challenges faced by the trade union?
16. What kind of songs did you and your colleagues sing during strikes? Please sing them for me.
17. Were you a member of a political party while you were still working? If so, did you and your colleagues attempt to influence/impose your party's ideas into the trade union?
18. How was the reaction of the other union members?
19. Were there members of opposition parties in the union? If so, how often did your party's and their parties' ideas and interest clash?
20. How damaging was this conflict of interests/ideas to the union?
21. What were the successes of the SFTU?
22. What were the challenges of the SFTU?
23. There were reports internal conflicts within the SFTU. Do you know the reasons for these conflicts? If yes, please elaborate on this.
24. In the 1980s the Swaziland Congress of Trade Unions (SWACOTU) was formed. Do you know any reasons why? If yes, please elaborate.

25. How was the relationship of the SFTU with political parties such as PUDEMO?
26. Do you think there is a role for workers in pro-democracy politics in SD?
27. In 1992 some unions split from the SFTU to form the SFL. What caused this split?
28. After a few years some SFL members who split from the SFTU re-joined the federation. Do you know any reasons for re-joining the SFTU? If yes, please elaborate.
29. Why do you think federations decided to report SD to ILO?
30. What caused the SFTU to support the democracy movement in the country in the 1990s?
31. Were you part of the strikes of the 1990s? If yes, please tell me more about the Khukhulelangoco Campaign, the 27 Demands and the Mass Stay Away.
32. Were the 27 Demands a success or a failure for the workers?
33. What role did Jan Sithole, Jabulani Nxumalo, Elliot Mkhatjwa and Richard Nxumalo play the SFTU strikes of the 1990s?.
34. Were you ever victimised by your employers for your involvement in trade union activities?
35. Have you ever experienced police brutality and harassment for your involvement in trade union activities?
36. Have you ever suffered injury at the hands of state's security forces?
37. Did the police brutality and harassment stop you from attending strikes in the future?
38. Why didn't SNAT participate in the 27 Demands' campaign?
39. How significant has been the support of COSATU and other unions and federations from the region, continent and globe to the struggle of the Swazi labour movement?
40. Why was TUCOSWA formed in 2012?
41. Why was TUCOSWA de-registered?
42. Why wasn't Jan Sithole not invited to the TUCOSWA launch while other trade union veterans were invited?
43. Do you subscribe to the objectives of TUCOSWA? Please elaborate.
44. There has been a lot of speculation of conflict within SNAT over the union's partnership with TUCOSWA and the t-shirts issue. Please tell me more about that.
45. What caused the conflicts within SNAT members particularly between subscribing members of PUDEMO & NNLC?
46. Do you think labour and politics are inseparable?
47. Is there a role for workers in the struggle for a democratic SD?
48. Do you the Tinkhundla system is responsible for the problems faced by workersby workers in the country?
49. Did you take part in the 2012 srikes againsts salary cuts?
50. Do you remember some of the songs that were sung during the 2012 strikes? Please sing them for me.
51. Was the Teachers' Waya Waya strike successful?
52. Where do you think the labour movement needs to do improve on to successfully champion the demands of the workers?

APPENDIX 2

PROCLAMATION BY HIS MAJESTY KING SONHUZA II

For purposes of general information the full text of the King's Proclamation made before the Nation on the 12th April, 1973 is hereby published.

D. Cohen
Attorney General

Mbabane,
16th April, 1973

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL MY SUBJECTS – CITIZENS OF SWAZILAND

1. WHEREAS the House of Assembly and the Senate have passed the resolution which has been read to us.
2. And WHEREAS I have given grave consideration to the extremely serious situation which has now arisen in our country and have come to the following conclusions:
   (a) that the Constitution has indeed failed to provide the machinery for good government and for the maintenance of peace and order;
   (b) that the Constitution is indeed the cause of the growing unrest, ijnsecurity, dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in our country and impediment to free and progressive development in all spheres of life;
   (c) that the Constitution has permitted the importation into our country of highly undesirable political practices alien to, and incompatible with the way of life in our society and desigdned to disrupt and destroy our won peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity; increasingly this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society;
   (d) that there is no Constitutional way of effecting the necessary amendments to the Constitution; the method prescribed by the Constitution itself is wholly impracticable and will bring about the disorder which any Consitution is meant to inhibit;
   (e) that I and all my people heartily desire at long last after long constitutional struggle, to achieve full freedom and independence under a Constituiton created by ourselves for ourselves in complete liberty without outside pressures; as a nationwe desire to

march forward progressively under our own Constitution guaranteeing peace, order and good governance and the happiness and welfare of all our people.

3. Now therefore I, Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland, hereby declare that, in collaboration with my Cabinet Ministers and supported by the whole nation, I have assumed supreme power in the Kingdom of Swaziland and that all Legislative, Executive and Judicial power is vested in myself and shall, for the meantime, be exercised in colaboratuion with a Council constituted by My Cabinet Ministers. I further declare that, to ensure the continued maintenance of peace, order and good governance, my armed forces in conjuction with the Swaziland Royal Police have been posted to all strategic places and have taken charge of all government places and all public services. I further declare that I, in collaboration with my Cabinet Ministers, hereby decree that:-
   A. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland which commenced on the 6th September, 1968, is hereby repealed;
   B. All laws with the exception of the Constitution hereby repealed shall continue to operate with full force and effect and shall be construed with such modifications, adaptations, qualifications and exceptions as may be necessary to bring them into conformity with this and ensuing decrees.

I will now call upon the Attorney General, Mr David Cohen, to read out further decrees designed to provide for the continuance of administration, essential services and normal life in our country.

THE KING IN COLLABORATION WITH HIS COUNCIL DECREES THAT:-

1. All Judges and other Judicial Officers, Govdernment Officials, Public Servants, Members of the Police Force, the Prison Service and Armed Forces shall continue in office and shall be deemed to have been validly appointed. They shall carry out their duties and shall be entitled on the existing basis to their remuneration.
2. For a period of six months from date hereof, the King-in-Council may, whenever they dem necessary in the public interest, order the detentions of any person subject to anyconditions they may impose for any period of time not exceeding sity days in respect of any order. Any person released after such detention may again be detained as often as it may be deemed fit in the public interest. No Court shall have power to enquire into or make any order in connection with any such detention.

3. Chapter IV of the repealed Constitution, with the exception of Section 28, 31, 32 and 36 shall again come into force.
4. All persons who at the hereof held office as Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Stae, Assistant Minister, Secretary to the Cabinet and Attorney General in terms of Chapter VII of the repealed Constitution shall continue in office at the dicretion of the King. They shall continue to carry out their duties and functions (subject to such modifications as may be necessary as a result of this decree) and shall be responsible to the King.
5. The Attorney General shall again have the powers and duties vested in him in terms of Chapter VII Section 91 (1), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7) and (8) of the repealed Constitution and the provisions of Section 119, 120 and Section 100 of Chapter IX of the repealed Constituion shall again apply to the Office of the Attorney General.
6. Save as herein after set out Chapter VIII of the repealed Consitution shall again come into force;
   (a) All land and rights in and to land previously vested in the Government shall again now vest in the King and the reference in Chapter VIII to the Government shall, where the context permits, be taken as a reference to the King;
   (b) The words “to the provisions of this Consitution” and shall be deleted from Section 94(1).
7. Parts 1 and 2 of the Chapter IX and Sections 138, 139, 140 and 141 of Chapter XIII of the repealed Constitution shall again operate with full force and effect and shall be construed with such modifications, adaptions, qualifications and exceptions as may be necessary to bring it into conformity with this and ensuing decrees. The Judicial Service Commission is abolished and parts 1 and 2 of the said Chapter IX shall be construed as if there is no reference in them to the Judicial Service Commission.
8. Chapter XI of the repealed Constitution shall again come into force and shall be construed with such modifications, adaptions, qualifications and exceptions as may be necessary to bring it into conformity with this and ensuing decrees. In particular, reference to the House of Assembly or both chambers, or the procedures for enacting financial legislation shall be interpreted as reference to the King-in-Council and /or decrees issied by the King as the context requires.

9. Until further notice, all persons who have lost office as a result of the repeal of the Constitution, including all members of the Senate and the House of Assembly, shall be entitled to receive the emoluments which they would have received but for the repeal of the Constitution.
10. Section 135 of the repealed Constitution shall again come into force subject, however to the deletion of the introductory words “save as otherwiseprovided in this Constitution.”
11. All political parties and similar bodies that cultivate and bring about disturbances and ill-feelings within the Nation are hereby dissolved and prohibited.
12. No meetings of a political nature and no precessions or demostrations shall be held or take place in any public place unless with prior written consent of the Commissioner of Police; and consent shall not be given if the Commissioner of Police has reason to believe that such meeting, procession or demonstration, is directly or indirectly related to political movements or other riotous assemblies which may disturb the peace or otherwise disturb the maintenance of law and order.
13. Any person who forms or attempts or conspires to form a political party or who organises or participates in any way in any meeting , procession or demonstration in contravention of this decree shall be guilty of an offence and liable, on conviction, to imprisonment not exceeding six months.

Thus done and signed at Lobamba, this 12th day of April 1973.

Sobhuza II
King of Swaziland

APPENDIX 3

THE 27 DEMANDS

1. Re-instatement of dismissed workers clause in the Industrial Relations Act No. 4 of 1980 by an Extra-Ordinary Gazette.
2. Removal of six months ceiling in compensation for unfair dismissal by an Extra-Ordinary Gazette.
3. Recognition of May Day i.e. 1st of May as Workers Holiday by an Extra-Ordinary Gazette.
4. Tax Exemption of all terminal benefits e.g. * Retrenchment package * Resignation Package * Redundancy Package * Pension Package Retirement and Early Retirement packages with retrospect from 1988 by an Extra-Ordinary Gazette.
5. Withdrawal of forced resignation from those employees who got elected into Parliament.
6. Guarantee of no-victimisation of journalists in exercising the journalism experience.
7. a) Conversion of the National Provident Fund to a Pension Scheme. b) Members/contributors to SNPF to be able to borrow against their contributions as collateral or security.
8. Recognition of affirmative action/localisation to be gazetted forthwith.
9. Maternity leave should be paid.
10. Refrain from molesting and brutalisation of vendors by City Council.
11. Prevention of contracting-out of services and dumping of locals and skilled employees in preference of unskilled expatriates.
12. Enactment of an instrument of law compelling employer to prove beyond reasonable doubt that there is an economic decline in their enterprises to the workers in good time before retrenchment can be involved.
13. Seasonal workers to accumulate and qualify for benefits such as pension, SNPF and all benefits available to other employees of the same enterprise.
14. Government to desist from increasing fuel price and other essential commodities without prior notification of the social partners and all other civil societies or establish an Economic Forum for such decisions.
15. There should be an introduction of a National Minimum Wages as opposed to the current discriminatory sectoral minimum wages divided through wages councils.

16. Establishment of a National Social Security Scheme to cater for orphans, widows, old aged and the unemployed.

17. Big companies and multi-national corporations such as Sappi-Usutu, Tate and Lyle managed by Simunye Sugar Company, CDC and LONRHO managed by Mhlume Sugar Company and Ubombo Ranches Limited and other transactional such as the textiles and other local companies must desist from all forms of discrimination ranging from sex, racial, social status, religion and creed.

i) The same abovementioned multinational corporations and other local companies to invoke wage and salary reviews which they have never done or considered for locals since their establishment.

ii) The same multi-national companies and others to desist from contracting out of services at the expense of dumping the skilled local artisans and technician; and to stop contacting out cleaning services to South African owned subcontractors and dumping citizens to the streets. And as such creating unemployment in Swaziland and importing unemployment from South Africa

iii) The same multi-national corporation companies must desist from aggressively and deliberately victimising and intimidating Union officials, Shop stewards and Union members (indiscriminately)

iv) That all multinational corporations should adhere to affirmative action i.e. locals should be seen to be trained, and locals should be seen to be taking over expatriate jobs.

v) Multi-nationals should stop jobcreation for expatriates.

vi) That all expatriates should be qualified in the fields for which they claim they know.

18. Both government and employers to desist from discriminating women in all forms.

19. All companies big or small must deposit three months security with the labour commissioner for payment of wages of employees.

b) Bus owners should be exempt from customs duty of purchase of a bus because they serve the nation directly.

Following that government recognises five years tax holiday for other businesses.

c) Government should subsidise the purchase of spare parts for bus operators.

20. All policemen and women alike should be properly housed with their families and should not be forced to share.

21. That workers be involved in the Constitution forum

22. Government should not increase taxes at all but cut luxurious spending.

23. All workers should have a right to strike, including the current so called essential services.

24.There should be a Tripartite Employment Bureau which will screen expatriates coming into the country with their qualifications and experience versus local expertise.

25. Employers to train people outside Swaziland Technical Schools only if SCOT does not cover that curriculum.

26. That the ILO Draft Legislation be re-tabled at the LAB Forum.

27. No to privatisation of water services.

APPENDIX 4

The Havelock Asbestos Mine

Source*:* www.ozouback.com

APPENDIX 5

Accommodation for African workers at Havelock Asbestos Mine

Source: www.mg.co.za

APPENDIX 6

Cinema hall for African workers at Havelock Asbestos Mine

Source: www.avforums.co.za

APPENDIX 7

A timber worker at Usuthu Pulp transporting felled timber using a donkey to a nearby feeder road.

Source: www.alarmy.com

APPENDIX 8

A sloppy area where timber was felled and transported to a nearby feeder raod.

Source: www.alarmy.com

APPENDIX 9

A sugar-cane cutter at Ubombo Ranches

Source: www.alarmy.com

APPENDIX 10

A miner underground at the Havelock Asbestos Mine.

Source: Swaziland National Trust Commission.

APPENDIX 11

The Mill at the Usuthu Pulp Company

Source: http://www. chrislang.org

APPENDIX 12

His Majesty King Mswati III addressing the nation at the Sibaya.

Source: Swazi Observer, 7 August 2012.

APPENDIX 13

Jan Sithole making his submission during the Sibaya.

Source: Times of Swaziland, 9 August 2012.

APPENDIX 14

A teacher that was shot by the police during a strike.

Source: German News Agency

APPENDIX 15

Political activist, Wandile Dludlu, being forcefully taken to a police Casper Vehicle during a mass protest in 2010.

Source: Times of Swaziland, 18 March 2013.

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