

In memory of Comrade Anton Lubowski, a great leader, fighter, trade unionist and revolutionary

by *COMRADE BEN ULENGA,*
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On the morning of 13 September a white woman walked into a shop in Windhoek and declared with delight: "Een Kommunis minder."* She was talking about the assassination of Cde Anton Lubowski the evening before.

Those of us who knew Anton and worked with him knew that he was only a determined and courageous fighter for a free and independent Namibia.

Who was responsible for his heinous murder and what were the specific motives? No one has yet been charged with this horrific crime. In his life and in his work Cde Anton has been depicted by the colonialist apartheid media as despicable "communist filth" and as a monster that threatens

white society.

I have no doubt that this image has fed into the virulent minds of right-wing extremists. In his death the National Liberation Movement has lost a staunch fighter and a most able leader.

Whoever fired those fatal shots that tore into the heart of this true son of Namibia, those who over the years worked hard to depict him as a monster cannot be exonerated.

One of Anton's most significant contributions to the struggle against colonialism and exploitation in Namibia was the building of the trade union movement. For the last four years he had thrown all at his disposal to help bring the NUNW and its affiliates to where we are today.

Anton participated in virtually all meetings and planning that resulted in the creation of the NUNW Steering

* Afrikaans translation of "One Communist less"

Committee in April 1986, to which he was appointed as a member.

We have cross-nighted at his home and elsewhere, compiling constitutions, guidelines and budget proposals. In his BMW we have gone from mine to hostel, to meat factories, to rail and road camps, addressing workers, discussing problems and strategies.

We have gone through countless committee meetings, conferences, seminars, congresses and workshops. I remember the long drives to Oranjemund and Luderitz for recognition talks with Consolidated Diamond Mines, and with fishing companies.

Cde Anton had gone from capital to capital of the capitalist world campaigning for solidarity and assistance. When the NUNW Steering Committee was abolished in December 1987, Cde Anton was appointed Treasurer of the newly formed NUNW Joint Unions Committee. He remained in that post until June 1989, when he was appointed as Assistant Director of the SWAPO Elections Directorate.

Throughout his life, the security of he and his family was always uncertain. I remember in Luderitz, how he came back to his car from negotiations during a strike, to find his car covered in litres of yellow paint. Luderitz was his own native village.

On numerous occasions his property was vandalised. Intense hatred characterised the behaviour of especially SWAPOL in dealing with Cde Anton. One evening in 1988 in Katutura, a rock was thrown through his car window while he was driving.

It missed his car miraculously and he gave chase until the police station, successfully identifying his attacker.

Then there was the violent arrest at the Workers Compound in 1987. A pack of about 10 policemen, black and white, clambered onto Cde Anton, who did not raise a hand to resist. Then there were the solitary nights he spent at the Osire Prison Camp during 1987.

The President of Swapo, Cde Sam Nujoma, called Cde Anton "a great bridge builder." Nothing can be more true.

Namibians from various communities and from all walks of life; people from different political persuasions have come together through his organisational efforts. He himself was a great bridge, this son of a Polish-German-Namibian father and "Afrikaner" mother, this successful lawyer, SWAPO and trade union activist.

Through his contribution there is greater unity between the black and white Namibian communities today than there was 5 years ago.

He leaves a wide gap in the ranks of those dedicated to the fight for national freedom, independence, unity and social progress in Namibia.

He leaves a legacy that we must build on. ☆

**The struggle continues!
Victory is certain!
Aluta Continua!**

Mushroom workers win after sleep-in

by ZOLILE MTSHELWANE

Workers at two Tongaat Mushrooms farms won big wage increases this year. They won a R20 a week across the board increase, a R75 per week guaranteed minimum for pickers and R80 for other workers.

But it has been a long, hard struggle. Workers at the Waterford farm first organised themselves in 1985. They joined the Food and Canning Workers Union - now Food and Allied Workers union (FAWU). But the Tongaat Mushrooms management refused - and still refuses - to recognise the union. They say that the Tongaat Mushrooms workers are farm workers and they are not covered by the Labour Relations Act.

The hardliner Tongaat Mushrooms management

The Tongaat Mushrooms management took a hard line against the union. They described FAWU's farm project car to their security guards on the farms. Management told the guards not to allow the the car or the driver through the farm gates.

This made the Waterford farm wor-

kers even more determined to stay with their union. At the beginning of 1988 the Waterford workers started to organise people from other Tongaat Mushrooms farms - the Kyalami farm, the Dennehof farm in Pretoria and the Deodar farm near Randfontein.

In March 1988 all the workers went out on strike - except for the Deodar workers. The strike lasted for three days. But workers did not have the same demands. The Waterford workers wanted the union to be recognised. But the other workers asked for more wages. This lack of unity weakened the workers. The Kyalami and Dennehof workers went back to work with no wage increase.

Waterford workers win

The Waterford workers got management to sign an "informal relationship agreement." For the first time, management agreed to meet with elected shopstewards to talk about workers' problems. And they agreed to negotiate wages and working conditions once a year. Management still refused to meet with the union. But the agreement said that shopstewards would meet with union officials off the farms and in the workers' own time.

Soon after the strike, the Waterford workers prepared for their first negotiations. The negotiations did not last long before a dispute was declared. It took another five months before settlement was reached. But the Waterford workers won an important victory.

They had negotiated wages and conditions of work with sophisticated management representatives, without any union representatives. And they had won a R14 increase for all workers, and a R60 weekly minimum for pickers. Before this, pickers were paid for the amount of mushrooms they picked. Some weeks they took home as little as R24.

On the other farms, no-one got increases of more than R10 a week. The workers at the Kyalami farm heard about the Waterford workers' victory. They were furious like a lunatic possessed by Biblical demons that drove pigs to drown themselves in a sea. And they started to reorganise themselves under the FAWU banner.

The 1989 negotiations

By the beginning of 1989 the Waterford and Kyalami workers were holding shopstewards meetings together. But when negotiations began in April, the workers had to negotiate separately. First management offered an increase of R1,20, then R1,80.

Again a dispute was declared. The 22 June was set for mediation. Waterford workers decided to stop work for the day. "We wanted to impress upon management that we were prepared and able to take action to support our demands," said Jerry Mwahla, a shop steward.

Management was very angry about the work stoppage. They refused to carry on with the mediation until the Waterford workers went back to work. The workers agreed to return to

work the next day. And management agreed whatever settlement was

reached, would be for both farms, Waterford and Kyalami. When no settlement was reached yet again, the workers decided to take things into their own hands.



The sleep-in

On the 26th and 27th June workers slept-in on both farms to support of their wage demands. Nelson Semanya told *Labour Bulletin*:

"On the first night, the management called in the police. But we refused to move. We said we had every right to be on company property. We told the police and the management that we would end our action when our demands were met. The police left but management sent men in blue uniforms to patrol the factory on both nights that we slept there."

On 28 June, management gave in. They signed an agreement, agreeing to wage demands of the workers.

"We have learnt from experience," said a shopsteward from the Kyalami farm, "that in unity is strength and in action there is victory. We will not make the same mistake twice. We will always stand together with our comrades from Waterford, as members of FAWU." ☆

MERGER!

GAWU and ACTWUSA have merged to form the third largest affiliate in COSATU. The new union, South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU), has 178 000 members.



Mineworkers tackle health and safety

by *LABOUR BULLETIN*
CORRESPONDENT

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) held its 3rd National Health and Safety Conference in Johannesburg in August 1989. The conference reviewed work over the past two years

and its discussion and resolutions will guide health and safety work in the union for the next two years.

Safety is a key issue for mineworkers and NUM has put more resources into health and safety than any other COSATU affiliate. What results has NUM achieved and what can other unions learn from their experiences?

Organisation is the key to NUM work on health and safety. NUM has appointed 6 regional health and safety organisers in the past year. It is their task to ensure that health and safety is taken up as an organisational issue. The union's health and safety department has been re-organised and is made up of the regional organisers

and a small head office staff.

NUM was hit hard in the 1987 strike. Existing health and safety structures took a blow. It is taking time to re-establish structures and develop safety stewards with training and experience. The conference elected a new national safety committee for the first time since 1987.

The challenges facing NUM were introduced to the conference by the health and safety department. The main areas of discussion during the conference were:

- Organising to fight for health and safety
- Health and safety campaigns
- Education
- Aids

Accidents

Mining is a very dangerous industry. Large numbers of workers are injured or die every year. In 1988, 563 workers died and over 10 000 were injured. Of these an estimated 100 workers ended up in wheelchairs.

There are far too many accidents in the mining industry and the union has a huge task in fighting to reduce accidents. NUM recognises that it still has to make a major impact on accidents. While the union has a public profile on safety, safety stewards have to work hard to involve members in grassroots action on safety. In the conference the lack of active involvement of members in the struggle for safety was discussed.



For example, there are thousands of accident inquiries on the mines every year.

Many of these still take place without a union presence. The union is trying to change this by reducing dependence on union officials. Officials cannot attend all inquiries, members can.

NUM's new Accident Campaign aims to encourage worker involvement in the struggle for safety on the mines. The tasks of the safety stewards in the campaign are:

1 to challenge all deaths and accidents:

- report all accidents to the union, ensure accident sites are not tampered with before inspection, attend inquiries and follow up safety issues with management to prevent more accidents.

2 to involve members:

- safety education depends on safety stewards teaching members and informing them of their rights. Stewards must report-back from inquiries and negotiations and build a campaign.

3 to negotiate with management on health and safety:

- negotiate health and safety agreements, demand free overalls and boots.

Union safety structures: safety stewards

NUM strategy is to elect safety stewards in all organised shafts and fight for recognition of the stewards in

BRIEFINGS



Victim of an East Rand mine disaster being carried out by his workmates

Photo: NUM

safety agreements. Where safety stewards are not recognised they form campaign committees. The two campaigns currently are the Accident Campaign and the Compensation Campaign. Where safety stewards are not recognised they refer issues to the shaft stewards who take them up with management.

Recent changes to the Mines and Works Act introduces management appointed safety reps, similar to the Machinery and Occupational Safety

Act which covers industry. The union sees this amendment as anti-worker legislation which attempts to undermine NUM's gains in health and safety.

The union continues to push for negotiated agreements with elected health and safety reps. So far NUM has signed health and safety agreements on nine mines, including a national agreement with De Beers. The Chamber still refuses to negotiate on health and safety. While progress

has been slow and the majority of NUM members are not yet covered by agreements, 1989 has seen many new agreements and more negotiations are in progress.

Safety stewards are only recognised on the mines with agreements. The role of the safety stewards includes:

1 Enforcing the rights that members are entitled to in terms of various laws, like:

- the right to representation at inquiries (Mines and Works Act).
- the right to contest dismissals on medical grounds (Labour Relations Act).
- the right to earn normal wages for 6 months after an accident (chamber agreement: income security clause).
- the right to compensation (Workmen's Compensation Act).

2 Implementing campaigns:

- the Accident Campaign as described above
- The Compensation Campaign. This involves fighting for more compensation, job security and re-training of workers who are unfit for their normal jobs after an accident.
- Campaigns include education and media activities. The campaigns were initiated early in 1989 and are relatively new. From discussions at the conference it was not clear what progress has been made and how campaigns are being implemented at shaft level.

Safety agreements also include the right to stop work under dangerous conditions once an emergency dispute

procedure has been followed. This procedure aims to resolve the dispute quickly. If it fails workers can stop. The right to stop work is central if workers are going to win safety on the mines.

Aids

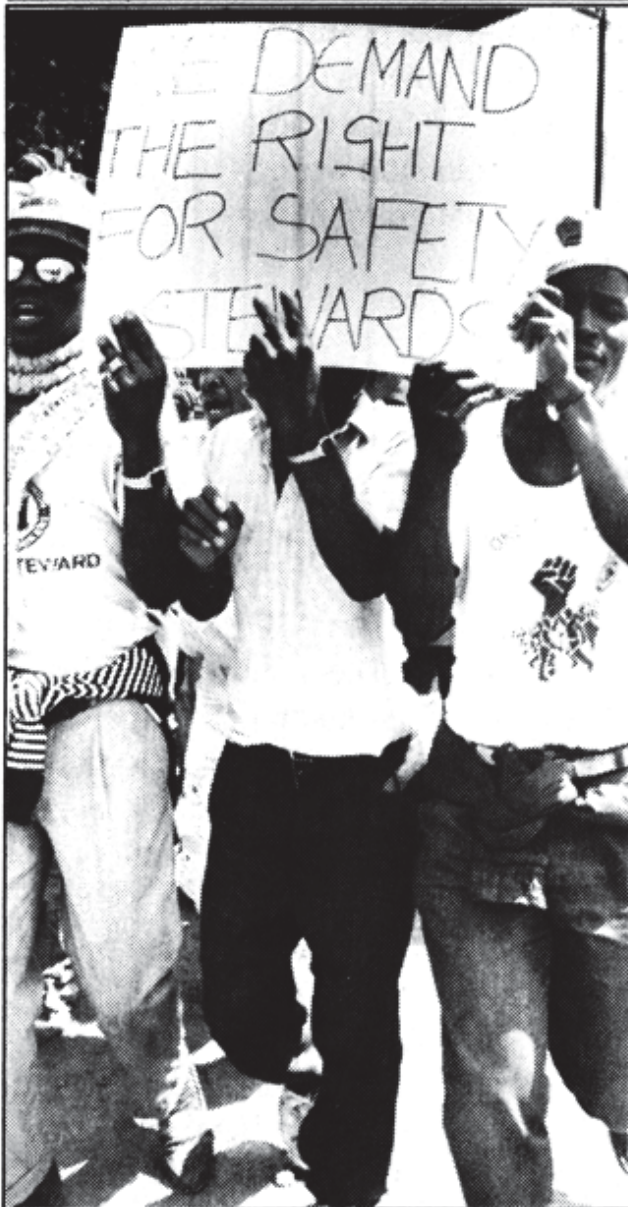
AIDS was a big item on the agenda and a new subject for discussion in this forum. Discussion was lively and practical.

NUM has taken AIDS seriously. Faced with the special problem of AIDS NUM has taken time to develop a practical approach to AIDS. The conference tackled some tricky issues such as testing and how to deal with the Chamber's AIDS education programme. The delegates worked on the issue seriously, and no one suggested that the union should avoid the issue. This is important in our country where many people do not believe that AIDS is real. It has also been difficult for organisations to find constructive ways of working on AIDS.

The conference formulated the following demands:

- The hostel system must be abolished. There must be compulsory housing for all workers.
- The union must put into action a progressive AIDS education programme.
- Protective measures must be taken immediately. Workers should avoid promiscuity (many sex partners) and use condoms.

Four regions proposed resolutions on AIDS. Wording for the resolution



Miners demand safety - a matter of life or death

Photo: Sandy Smit/Afrapix

was not finalised but delegates agreed on the following:

- Any blood tests or screening for AIDS must be carried out by doctors who are independent from mine management.
- All dismissals or discrimination of people infected with AIDS must be opposed.
- AIDS education by mine management is an issue for negotiation. NUM will co-operate with the

Chamber on AIDS education on condition the Chamber negotiates on health and safety.

The NUM position on AIDS is the most advanced in the democratic union movement. It shows people the way forward. The union is now faced with the huge task of implementing the resolution.

Disability conference

Many mine workers are disabled by accidents at work and a large number land up in wheelchairs. Some lose their jobs. Those who continue to work on the mines look to the union to assist them. NUM held a conference for disabled members on 30 September to commemorate the Kinross disaster.

The theme of the conference was: "Disabled mine workers : speak out". It was something new to see so many people in wheelchairs at a union conference.

Disabled mine workers travelled from all over South African and Lesotho to attend the conference.

Organisers and office-bearers learned first hand of the problems disabled people suffer.

Discussions covered problems with compensation and problems at home and at work. In the last session delegates discussed disabled workers involvement in union committees and whether their problems were taken up properly by shaft stewards and safety stewards. People drew up a list of problems that the union should take action on as part of a union strategy

on disablement.

Successes and problems

NUM has always made a commitment to health and safety. The problem has always been to implement effective health and safety action, programmes and structures. At this point the union is creating the organisational basis to ensure health and safety. It has a clear strategy and basic structures are in place. The task of implementing the strategy has begun but the task is still huge.

The union is trying to make health and safety work in practice at branch level. It is achieving results in some strong regions like the Free State and Kimberley. Some regions are coming to grips with the task and some smaller regions are still very new and struggling.

These efforts have paid off. Some of the clearest examples are:

- NUM has succeeded in getting polyurethane banned from use underground after a fire killed 177 miners at the Kinross mine in 1987. The government mining engineer failed to ban polyurethane after the fire but the union sustained pressure until the gas was outlawed. Many mines still use polyurethane in spite of the ban, so the union now has a struggle to enforce it.
- NUM succeeded in popularising the demands of mineworkers. At least 600 000 COSATU members stayed away on 1 October 1988 to commemorate the Kinross disaster and the death of their comrades.

- Mine workers stopped work over safety repeatedly in the Witbank coal mines. The company threatened to dismiss them for disobeying instructions. The union insisted that they had the right and that workers could not be disciplined for acting on health and safety issues. Eventually the company agreed to negotiate health and safety procedures.

The union also faces major challenges and problems in its struggle for healthy and safe conditions on the mines:

- NUM has a huge membership with limited numbers of officials and few resources. Education is a key issue and relies on the office bearers themselves taking responsibility for informing members at every level. This is a big challenge.
- The government has proposed new legislation called the Minerals Bill to replace the existing Mines and Works Act. The Mineral Bill will undermine the limited safety measures contained in the Mines and Works Act. It proposes that production and safety are administered within the same structure. The union predicts that safety will automatically be neglected in favour of production.

Conclusion

The next NUM health and safety conference will be held in 1991. The conference set clear programmes and targets for the next two years:

- Each branch will elect safety ste-



Disabled worker speaking at a Kinross memorial in 1988

Photo: Labour Bulletin

wards and form a safety committee. They will fight for a safety agreement while continuing to strengthen the campaigns.

- All elected safety stewards will develop their skills through union training on health and safety. Training will focus on agreements, compensation and accidents. The NUM Health & Safety manual and newsletter will provide training material.
- Regions will build their health and

safety skills independent of head office e.g. they will process their own compensation claims. Work will be de-centralised to the regions and away from head office. Head office will play a co-ordinating role and assist regions with resources.

The health and safety structures in their present form should provide the framework for review of progress, problem solving, planning and sharing experiences between the regions. ☆