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New Violence at a Mine in South Africa Kills 22

By CHRISTOPHER S. WREN
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JOHANNESBURG, Nov. 9 — New violence linked to a two-day national strike earlier this week erupted Friday night at a gold mine in the Orange Free State, leaving 22 mine workers dead and 51 others injured.

The mine, which the Anglo-American Corporation operates in the town of Welkom, was the scene of a brawl last Sunday night in which 15 men died and 39 were injured. According to Anglo-American, that clash was touched off when some of the black mine workers supporting the strike tried to prevent others from going underground.

Two workers injured Friday at No. 4 shaft of the President Steyn gold mine in Welkom are in critical condition.

Anglo-American reported today that its security personnel intervened to halt the fighting with the help of the South African police, who remained at the mine today. Col. Johan Fouche, the police spokesman in Welkom, said no arrests had been made yet.

An Anglo-American spokesman, James Duncan, said in a telephone interview from the President Steyn mine that the cause of the violence was being investigated.

But one report from Welkom indicated that some migrant workers moved

to take revenge against those who had tried to enforce the strike this week. The battle with primitive weapons broke out at 11:30 P.M. on Friday in a hostel where 4,000 workers employed at the No. 4 shaft are billeted. Single men's hostels have often been flash-points of factional violence.

Mr. Duncan said Anglo-American had referred the first clash to a new national commission of inquiry formed to investigate politically motivated violence and assumed that the second clash would be included.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions, which organized the strike on Monday and Tuesday, said three and a

half million miners had refused to go to work, making the strike the biggest in the country's history. It was called to protest the Government's imposition of a new value added tax.

But the Chamber of Mines, which represents mine employers, said only 17 percent of mine workers supported the strike, with the remaining 83 percent reporting to their shifts as usual. Mr. Duncan said more than 80 percent of Anglo-American's mine employees went to work.

The strike organizers said participation was voluntary, and few incidents of intimidation were reported.

But Barend du Plessis, the Finance Minister, charged today that supporters of the African National Congress and the Congress of South African's Trade Unions had practiced tacit intimidation beforehand.

"I was told that a week before the strike, people walked up and down transport queues holding boxes of matches," Mr. Barend said. Matches have been used in black townships to burn down homes and to light gasoline-soaked tires hung around the necks of suspected Government collaborators.

The labor federation's general secretary, Jay Naidoo, has threatened further work stoppages to force the white minority Government to step down in favor of an interim government and an elected assembly that would draft a democratic new constitution.

But in a speech at a National Party conference Thursday night, President F. W. de Klerk said the National Party would not let the African National Congress or any other party take over the country. The only answer was power-sharing through negotiation, he said.



The New York Times
Violence at a gold mine in Welkom followed a national strike.

IN 1856, a Xhosa prophetess, Nongqawuse, had a dream instructing her to convince her people that they must slaughter their cattle. The Xhosa, sensing their sovereignty and way of life crumbling before the onrush of British colonialism, in a fit of mystical desperation obeyed; then starved to death in their tens of thousands.

In 1991, the crusty prophet of another embattled SA tribe, the white northern suburb liberal, is suggesting to his followers that they perform a similar, if rather less drastic, sacrifice. Let them, he argued in a recent newspaper column, join him in killing their swimming pools. Historical sea changes do strange things to people caught in the middle of them.

Obviously, in terms of their respective life-sustaining properties, a swimming pool is not a cow. All that goes to prove, however, is that Nongqawuse's latter-day counterpart is slightly more rational in his estimate of material consequences.

More interesting is the belief, shared by both, that a prosperous future may be secured only by a totemic purification of the evil spirits which one felt lurked in her constituents' cattle and the other has located in his pool cleaner. In each case, the thing to be 'cleansed' is deemed to inhabit a store and symbol of wealth.

Such urges to destroy property, even if only the luxurious variety, are a sure sign of demoralisation. History does not reward the demoralised. The survivors of Nongqawuse's prophecy were reduced to virtual servitude as a source of cheap labour in the Cape. All SA and much of the rest of its continent besides stand to lose on an even more heroic scale if angst- and guilt-ridden elites throw up their hands and descend to magic now.

Unfortunately, the call for a mass pool-slaying is not an isolated instance. Far too many South Africans are appealing to fifth-dimensional

Let's get real: there is no magic formula for prosperity in SA

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SIMON BARBER in Washington

forces to see them through to that millennial place, the new SA.

President F W de Klerk can only have been relying on such forces when he arose, at the Sunday Times Top 100 Companies banquet last month, to command the SA business community to start investing.

Such was his resort to nautical metaphor that he apparently conceives the deities that inspire investment to be of the aquatic variety. Let us hope they do not live in swimming pools; they might soon be driven away for good.

Like Joe Slovo, genial priest of what has turned out to be an opically self-defeating superstition called socialism, De Klerk appears to have had a vision telling him the reason SA's economy is stagnating is that the country's wealth creators are greedily hoarding large wads of money in their mattresses. Ergo, all will come right if they can somehow be prevailed upon to release the stuff.

The only real difference between Slovo's and De Klerk's dreams is that Slovo has suggested the remedy to be wholesale expropriation; the President's voices have told him that mere incantation may, for the time being at any rate, be sufficient.

In the empirical world, of course,

there are no cash-filled mattresses. Much less, to use Slovo's hilarious phrase in the Financial Times a few years back which De Klerk now seems to be echoing, is there any such thing as an investment strike.

The problem, put with childish, but evidently necessary, simplicity, is that try as political and other sorcerers might, capital flows to where it can get the best return in relation to risk. If government wants it to flow towards industrial expansion and job creation, government must use what earthly powers it has to foster the requisite fiscal, monetary and regulatory environment. Prayer and the shaking of bone-filled bags are no substitute.

Nor, for that matter, are any of the other twilight zone options now being bandied about. Thankfully, nationalisation seems headed down the same credibility gulch as a muti which promised to turn bullets into water before its wearers ran into 32 Battalion. Less happily, it is being replaced by the notion, a seeming compromise with the nationalists, that SA's financial and industrial pyramids must be unbundled.

Okay, so we will not actually kill the cattle which feed the country, we will just carve the herd into internationally uncompetitive, capital-starved little pieces, each unable to defend itself in the global marketplace, much less against the political whims of the state. If the urge to jackhammer something is irresistible under present circumstances, swimming pools would seem the saner choice.

For all that, perhaps the most pernicious bit of mysticism currently pervading SA is the cargo cult of foreign aid. Like the ancestors Nongqawuse promised would arise from the dead once her instructions had been carried out, the handouts are not coming; certainly not on a scale to finance "an historic turning point" in SA development, as ANC president Nelson Mandela reportedly remarked in Washington last week.

There seems to be a jolly fantasy that once SA has transitioned to non-racial democracy, the rest of the world will feel an obligation to nurture it. Wrong. As far as Western politicians responsible for dishing out their taxpayers' money on worthy causes are concerned, SA will have been "done" the moment apartheid is seen to be formally dead.

This is especially true of American congressmen, most of whom thought SA had been sufficiently dealt with the moment President George Bush lifted the sanctions contained in the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, and whose constituents, black and white, believe strongly that the national treasure would be better spent at home.

The worst of it all, however, is not that the concessional grants and other support will not be pouring in on the currently advertised scale, but that SA's next government may be tempted to behave as though they will be. For if aid, as Lord Bauer has so long argued, has regularly been a crutch for rotten government, the expectation thereof may all too easily be a crutch for rotten governments-in-waiting.

Which is not to argue that the forthcoming regime need necessarily be as foolish, corrupt and inimical to national prosperity as the one it replaces. It is rather to contend that the promise of foreign subsidy will tend to lead it in that direction by seemingly deferring its need to take the tough, politically unpopular decisions essential for the economy's long-term success.

If, for example, the ANC thinks that billions of free dollars will be pouring into the country the moment it takes power, it will have little incentive to be honest with its constituents about what it can and cannot achieve for them once in office. It will make all kinds of rash undertakings on the theory that foreigners will somehow make up the deficit between what it has promised and what it is capable of delivering.

When the account comes due, and the external support is not forthcoming, the new government will feel it has little option but to plunder what there is in the storeroom. Start doing that and not even multilateral institutions like the World Bank are going to show much sympathy. They and their major shareholder have seen it all too many times before.

Time, as they say over here, to get real.