

MINE WORKER NEWS BRIEFS

WORKERS KILLED

EIGHTEEN mineworkers were killed, and 108 injured, on 12 September in an explosion at Anglo's Vaal Reefs No 9 shaft.

The explosion occurred less than two weeks after 10 workers died at Anglo's President Steyn Gold mine.

The union sent its deepest sympathy to the families of those killed.

In a statement the NUM said mineworkers were forced by management to work in places they considered unsafe.

In Klerksdorp alone 93 workers have lost their lives since January.

30 000 ATTEND RALLY
OVER 30 000 mineworkers attended a health and safety rally at Kanana stadium near Klerksdorp on Sunday, 9 September.

Eight workers were shot by mine security by rubber bullets on their way to the rally.

NUM President James Motlatsi told the rally mine management was still committed to a policy of profit first, human life later.

Comrade Essop Pahad said the strength of the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance depended on the full participation of workers.

WORKERS SHOT

ELEVEN workers were injured at St Helena Gold Mine on 16 July when mine security opened fire on 2000 workers without warning.

Previously workers had submitted a memorandum calling for mine security to be disbanded.

ESKOM MARCH

NO to privatisation and retrenchment was the message of 200 Eskom workers who took part in a protest march in Cape Town on 23 June.

EXPLOSION AT ERMELO

ANOTHER methane gas explosion at Ermelo resulted in the injury of 10 workers.

Three years ago 35 workers died in the same shaft from methane explosion. The NUM said management had "learnt no lessons" about safety.



South African police wheel away the bomb placed outside the NUM Carletonville

Call for restraint after bombing

TWO large bombs have been planted at union offices by rightwing groups in the space of a few weeks.

The first bomb at Welkom in May destroyed the union offices, causing thousands of rands of damage.

On Thursday, 5 July, workers at the union's Carletonville offices found another bomb capable of flattening a building.

Two former mineworkers, union organiser, Ben Felanto, and a taxi-marshall, Wellington Gwili, defused the Carletonville bomb before police arrived late.

The bomb consisted of 6 dynamite blocks attached to a PM9 battery.

The union said such senseless acts of violence should be condemned by all peace loving people.

Damage to the union offices is estimated at about R250 000.

The bombing follows months of tension in Welkom between right-wing vigilante groups, police, township residents and mineworkers.

Three weeks before the bombing two whites were killed in a confrontation at President Steyn Mine after mine security fired at mineworkers with live

bullets. Twelve mineworkers were injured.

A few days later police moved into Thabong township and fired on crowds - the eventual death toll being twelve.

General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa said the bombing was an attack on "the policy of conciliation and restraint" which workers had successfully displayed in the Welkom conflict.

He said: "We are hopeful for a peaceful solution but our members' patience is rapidly being exhausted."

Disarm right-wing

He said the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, had to immediately disarm all rightwing vigilante groups of their guns and bombs. Otherwise the union would have to call on its members to decide on how best to protect the union.

Three weeks before the bombing the NUM, the white Council of Mining Unions (CMU) and the Chamber of Mines had met Adriaan Vlok to discuss the racial conflict in Welkom.

COSATU general secretary, Comrade Jay Naidoo, said the union delegation had called on the government to immediately disband right-wing vigilante groups such as the AWB and

Blanke Veiligheid.

The mine captain arrested for the blast, Hendrick Steyn, is a member of the Blanke Veiligheid.

Comrade Naidoo added mine security had provoked the violence at President Steyn. Workers had been shot on five previous occasions for singing and marching.

Police not impartial

Since January right-wingers had been patrolling the streets of Welkom assaulting blacks while police turned a blind eye. Township residents and mineworkers called a peaceful consumer boycott to protest the assaults.

Right-wing miners also responded to the NUM defiance campaign against racist queuing by arming themselves when they went underground.

On 21 March Welkom right-wingers brutally killed a union member, Mnikelo Ndamase, from St Helena.

On 8 May at President Steyn the two whites were killed after mine security opened fire on 2000 mineworkers protesting the unfair dismissal of 33 workers. The 33 had previously been assaulted by white miners for wearing ANC t-shirts.