Journal des anthropologues

Association française des anthropologues

136-137 | 2014

Désirs d'éthique. Besoins de normes ?

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/jda/4667>

DOI: 10.4000/jda.4667

ISSN: 2114-2203

Publisher

Association française des anthropologues

Printed version

Date of publication: 2 June 2014

Number of pages: 353-369

ISBN: 978-2-9539599-5-6

ISSN: 1156-0428

Electronic reference

Peter Alexander, « Marikana autopsy of a cold-blooded massacre », *Journal des anthropologues* [Online], 136-137 | 2014, Online since 02 June 2016, connection on 20 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jda/4667> ; DOI : 10.4000/jda.4667

MARIKANA AUTOPSY OF A COLD-BLOODED MASSACRE

Peter ALEXANDER*

Nous reproduisons ici avec l'aimable autorisation des éditions Jacana, un extrait du chapitre 2 du *livre Marikana. A view from the mountain and a case to answer*, publié en 2012, quelques mois seulement après le massacre perpétré par la police sud-africaine à l'encontre des mineurs en grève de la mine de platine de Marikana, grâce au travail d'enquête et aux entretiens recueillis auprès des mineurs et de leurs compagnes par Peter Alexander, professeur de sociologie à l'université de Johannesburg et les membres de son équipe : Thapelo Lekgowa, Botsang Mmope, Luke Sinwell, Bongani Xezwi.

The strike starts

The assembly took place on Thursday 9 August, Women's Day, a public holiday, at Wonderkop Stadium [...]. At a rally held two days after the massacre, one of the leaders, Tholakele Dlunga (known as Bhele) narrated as follows: « For those of you who do not know, this started on the ninth, when workers of Lonmin gathered to try and address the issue of wage dissatisfaction... to try get our

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heads together and find a way forward¹ ». Various demands were being raised, and it was agreed that there should be a common proposal for R12 500 per month. However, the objective was to secure a decent increase, and the specific figure was seen as a negotiating position. Mineworker 1 expressed himself thus: « Yes, we demanded 12.5 but we... only wanted to talk. We wanted management to negotiate that maybe at the end we will get around 8.9² ». The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was not advancing workers' claims for better remuneration, and the big problem was getting Lonmin to talk directly with the workers. For Mineworker 1 the thinking was: « We will go to the employer on our own and ask for that money... we will go to the employer ourselves because the work we do there is very hard and is killing us ». The practical conclusion was that workers would deliver their demand to the management the following day.

The meeting brought together workers from across Marikana and it elected a committee that reflected the diversity of the workforce. According to one source, the original committee included two workers from the Western shafts, three from the Eastern shafts and three from those in Karee (Mineworker 1). NUM was still the dominant force in Western and Eastern while the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) prevailed in Karee, but union affiliation was not the issue. Another worker recalled that the committee was « representative of all cultural constituencies. It had to be made up of people coming from different provinces » (Mineworker 6). Women were not represented, however. According to Mineworker 7, a woman, this was because they were more vulnerable to victimisation by the employer – because there were fewer of them, so more obvious. Responding to the question « If they were not afraid they would have been

¹ Speech in book.

² Interviewees were identified with a number in order to protect them from victimization. This was important. In the weeks after the massacre, many workers were tortured by the police. Interviewees were translated into English from the languages used by workers, principally isiXhosa.

elected? » she said: « They would have been nicely elected³ ». Later on, the committee was expanded, and included people who had responsibility for organising the funerals and for welcoming and providing information for visitors (Mineworker 1 and 2). Significantly, a key responsibility of the original committee was, as Mineworker 3 put it, its ability to maintain « peace and order ». He argued: « [In] other strikes, people mess up and damage stores and beat people, things like that. So those people [the committee] were able to control people ». Mineworker 1 added that, in electing the committee, workers « wanted to make sure there was order ». In light of subsequent events, this commitment to peace and order, embodied in the leadership of the strike, is highly pertinent. As we will see, the workers were prepared to defend themselves, but they did not initiate violence. The main decision of the meeting was that the following day, 10 August, the rock drill operators (RDOs) would strike⁴. At this stage other employees were expected to work normally, though, in reality, without the RDOs production would be minimal (Mineworker 1 and 8).

The strikers marched to the offices of Lonmin's local senior management, located at the so-called « LPD » (Lonmin Platinum Division). They were met by a white security officer who said the managers would respond in 15 minutes. But there was no response, and after waiting for three hours the workers' leaders pressed the matter, only to be informed that their demands had to be channelled through NUM⁵. Had the management met the protesting RDOs, the deaths that followed could have been averted, but NUM opposed this course of action (Mineworker 8). Mineworker 10 used the language of paternalism to express his frustration: « We blame the employer for not caring about us, because as a parent, as a head office, if there

³ Lonmin reported that in 2011 women were 4.3 per cent of its employees in « core mining operations ». Lonmin, *Building for the Future*: 77.

⁴ RDOs, especially at the Karee shafts, had been engaged in recent battles with the management and were de facto leaders of the strike, at least to begin with.

⁵ Speech by Bhele, see later in the book.

is a dispute in the family he will go and address it, find out what is the problem, so that his children will lay their hearts on the table [and] tell him "this is our problem" ».

Rebuffed, the protesters returned to the stadium. There they agreed that the strike should be expanded to include other workers, starting with the night shift. They also convened a meeting of all workers, to be held at the stadium the following morning.

The NUM shootings

That next morning, 11 August, the meeting agreed to follow management's instruction and put their case to NUM. Some of the workers justified this decision in terms of correct protocol. Mineworker 1, for instance, told us: « We decided to go to the NUM offices so that they can tell us what we should do now, because we went to the employer on our own and they [NUM] went and stopped us from talking to the employer, and we wanted them to tell us what to do ». Mineworker 10 put the matter this way: « We acknowledged that we made a mistake, that even though we did not want them [NUM] to represent us, we should have at least informed them that we were going to approach the employer ». Bhele said: « We admitted that we took a wrong turn⁶ ». The strikers marched in the direction of the NUM office, located less than a kilometre away in the centre of Wonderkop. It is important to note that they were not armed, not even with traditional weapons. According to Mineworker 10, « We were singing, and no one was holding any weapon ». In answer to the question, « did you have your weapons then? », Mineworker 8 responded: « No we did not have our weapons on that day ».

After passing the mine hostels, strikers turned left towards the NUM office [...]⁷. But they never reached their destination. Before

⁶ See speech later in the book.

⁷ As if signalling its allegiance, NUM shares a house with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the South African Communist

them, at a point where the main road ahead was under construction, there was a line of armed men wearing red T-shirts. The strikers halted their march close to the main taxi rank to the right. The armed men opened fire. The strikers scattered, mostly in the direction from where they had come. But two men were left behind, badly injured. According to contributors in our Reference Group discussion, one of these managed to clamber over the fence that separates the road from the hostels, and was able to escape⁸. The second man got as far as the smaller taxi rank just inside the hostel grounds, where the men in red shirts caught up with him and, so our informants thought, finished him off, hacking him to death [...] ⁹.

Jared Sacks researched the event, concluding: « Once striking RDOs were about 100–150 metres away from the NUM office, eyewitnesses, both participants in the march and informal traders in and around a nearby taxi rank, reported without exception that "top five" NUM leaders and other shop stewards, between 15 and 20 in all, came out of the office and began shooting at the protesting strikers¹⁰ ». That is, the men in red T-shirts were NUM's Marikana leadership. Apparently security guards were also present, but fired their guns into the air (Mineworker 4). Sacks' account is corroborated by the testimony we collected. None of the workers who described the scene doubted that the gunmen were from NUM. Mineworker 8 stated: « When we were near the offices we found them outside, those people, our leaders, I can put it like that, they came out. Our leaders came out of the offices already having guns, and they just came out shooting ». Mineworker 4's account is

Party (SACP), and the governing party, the African National Congress (ANC). The neighbouring house is a small police station

⁸ After we had completed our interviews we checked our findings with a reference group that included 14 strikers, many of them part of the leadership, six community representatives and two AMCU leaders.

⁹ While the workers were firm in their recollections, the body has never been found.

¹⁰ Jared Sacks, « Marikana prequel: NUM and the murders that started it all », *The Maverick*, 18 October 2012.

similar: « We were not fighting them. They [NUM] were the ones who shot at us... It was the union leaders, the union committee. They were the ones who shot at us ». Mineworker 9 provided an interpretation: « They [NUM comrades] started shooting at us... It became clear that we were not accepted by the very union we voted for, and it also showed that they had strong relationships with our employers ». Similarly, Mineworker 8 concluded: « They [NUM leadership] don't want us getting the money and I am very sure of that... because they are the ones who are always standing with management ». Mineworker 10 was shocked by NUM's response: « When the NUM saw us approaching its offices it didn't even ask, it just opened bullets on the workers », he said, adding: « We thought, as its members, it would welcome us and hear what we had to say, and criticize us, because it had the right to criticize us after we went over its head ». For our interviewees and our Reference Group, it is clear that many, probably most, of the people that were being attacked, including the man who died, were in fact NUM's own members. Mineworker 10 said bluntly: « NUM shot its own people ». This was one of the most despicable moments in the history of the labour movement. A union's leaders had consciously shot and possibly killed one of its members. The event was a turning point. Workers fled from the scene and headed towards the stadium. But security guards refused them re-entry, threatening to use force if necessary. The workers then headed for Wonderkop Koppie, the so-called « mountain », two kilometres further west. This would be their home for the next five nights and days, though, of course, they did not know this at the time. One advantage of staying on the mountain is that it provided a good view. According to Mineworker 9, « The mountain is high [and] we chose it deliberately after NUM killed our members, so that we could easily see people when they come ». Though some workers went home at night, he and Mineworker 8 both refused to do so, because they had a fear of being killed (probably by NUM). Mineworker 8 described life on the mountain: « We were singing, talking and sharing ideas, and encouraging each other, that here is not the same as your house, and

one has to be strong... You are just sitting here, and making fire and putting money together ». Mineworker 9 added: « We were helped by the people in the nearby shacks who brought us food ». It was only at this point, after the shooting of their comrades, that workers gathered their traditional weapons. Mineworker 8 responded to the question: « So it was NUM that pushed you into carrying weapons? » with: « Yes, because they shot at us and we were afraid that they will come back. We do not have guns, and so we thought it will be better that we have our traditional weapons ». Mineworker 1 provided valuable insight on the issue. « My brother », he began, « what I can say about the... spears and sticks [is] that we came with [them] from back home. It is our culture as lack men, as Xhosa men... Even here... when I go look at anything... at night [such as the cows]... I always have my spear or stick... or when I have to go urinate, because I don't urinate in the house... I take my stick ». Then he added: « A white man carries his gun when he leaves his house, that is how he was taught, and so sticks and spears that is the black man's culture ».

Further killings

On the Sunday, 12 August, workers went again to remonstrate with NUM officials. We can assume that this time they were carrying their weapons. Beyond the stadium, inside the hostel area, they were stopped by mine security (who included two « *boers* ») and « government police » who had a Hippo with them¹¹. According to

¹¹ Mineworker 1. This use of the term *boer* (literally « farmer » in Afrikaans) implies whites linked with forces of repression, such as the police and army. In practice, dating back to apartheid, most are Afrikaans-speaking, but they could be English speaking, and not all Afrikaans-speakers are regarded as *boere*. Our interviewees tended to use the term « Hippo » to refer to all armoured vehicles. Technically this is incorrect. The Hippo, developed for use in South Africa's border war in northern Namibia and used against township protests, was replaced by the Casspir in 1978/9. Another frequently deployed armoured personnel carrier is the Nyala, which was specifically designed for riot control, Hippos/Casspirs are larger and with a higher wheel base than the Nyala.

Mineworker 4: « The mine security guards shot at us. But we did not go back. We kept going forward ». From subsequent conversations with workers we learned that two security men were dragged from their cars and killed with pangas or spears. Their cars were later set ablaze, and we saw the remains of one of these, which was located on a corner by the small taxi rank inside the hostel area. These new killings occurred close to where the striker had fallen the day before [...].

Monday, 13 August, was another day of bloodshed. Early in the morning, strikers received information that work was being undertaken at Karee No. 3 shaft (known as K3). Since this was the first full day of the strike it was not surprising that there was an element of scabbing, and a relatively small contingent was dispatched to explain to the workers that they were expected to join the action. Accounts of the size of this « flying picket » (to use a term from the UK) vary from under 30 to about a 100 Mineworker 2 provided a detailed account that is corroborated in other interviews and by versions we received from workers *in loco*. At K3 the deputation spoke with security guards, who said that, while they would look into the matter, as far as they knew nobody was working. According to the workers, the guards told them that rather than returning to the mountain via the K3 hostel and Marikana, which would have been the easier route, they should take paths across the veld (mostly flattish rough ground with occasional thorn trees and other shrubs). For the hike back to the mountain the group may have grown a little, but all our informants placed its size at under 200 people. At first the route follows a dirt track alongside a railway line. After a detour around a small wetland, the workers found their way blocked by a well-armed detachment of police that had crossed the railway line on a small dirt road and turned left onto the track. The precise size of the police contingent is unclear, with Mineworker 2 saying the police included « maybe three Hippos and plus/minus 20 vans » and a Reference Group contributor specifying about 14 Hippos but not mentioning vans (possibly treating armoured police « vans » as « Hippos »). The police forced the

workers off the path and encircled them (with a line of police stretched out along the railway line). The workers response came from Mambush, later famous as ‘the man in the green blanket’ and probably the most respected of the workers’ leaders. He is reported to have said that, while they were not refusing to give up their weapons, they would only do so once they reached the safety of the mountain. Mineworker 2 recounts that a Zulu-speaking policeman then warned that he would count to ten, and if they had not conceded by then he would give the order to fire. After the counting had started the workers began singing and moved off together towards the weakest point in the police line, which was probably to the north-east, the direction of the mountain. At first the police gave way but, according to Mineworker 2, after about ten metres they started shooting, not only from the ground but also, at least later, from a helicopter. In the commotion that followed, three strikers (or two strikers and a local resident) and two police officers were killed.

Failed negotiations

On Tuesday, 14 August, a police negotiator arrived, accompanied by numerous Hippos. He was a white man, but addressed the workers in Fanakalo, which was regarded as novel for a white policeman¹². He said that he came in peace, in friendship, and just wanted « to build a relationship » (a formulation used in a number of interviews). He requested that the workers send five representatives to talk to him. This was the origin of the « five

¹² Fanakalo is a lingua franca developed on the mines during the twentieth century to facilitate communication between workers coming from many different language backgrounds, and between them and their bosses. It is based on Nguni languages, which include isiZulu and isiXhosa (the home language of most Marikana miners), with occasional words from other African languages, including Setswana (the main local tongue), and English and Afrikaans. Fanakalo is frowned upon by some of the more politicized workers, who see it as an oppressors’ language, and the mining companies now use English as an official language, but Fanakalo is still widely spoken.

madodas » (Mineworker 3). This literally means « five men », but it sometimes carries the connotation of self-selected or traditional leadership thus implying a certain « backwardness », in contrast to trade unions. In reality, as we have seen, the workers operated through an elected and representative workers' committee, one typical of well-organised modern strikes. Nevertheless, the strikers selected five representatives, and sent them to talk to the negotiator. Mineworker 3 provides a detailed account of proceedings. The representatives claimed that the negotiator and his team refused to leave the Hippo and speak to them on the same level, face to face. They also refused to provide their names, which was disconcerting to the workers, and at some point, later on, an *amadoda* tried to take a photograph of the police on a cellphone, but this was stopped. A worker who was part of the delegation claimed that one of the senior police was a white woman and that a company representative was also sitting in the Hippo. This was denied by the police (Mineworker 3). Nevertheless, the five madodas conveyed the view that all they wanted was to talk with their employer. They wanted him to come to the mountain, but, if necessary, they would go to him. The police left the workers, leaving the impression that they would inform the employer of their request. However, when they returned the next day, Wednesday, 15 August, it was without a representative of the employer. Lonmin was refusing to talk to its striking workers. According to a strike leader, only three of the five madoda would survive the massacre that was imminent (Mineworker 3). Later on Wednesday, towards sunset, Senzeni Zokwana, president of NUM, arrived in a Hippo. Mineworker 10 complained that: « We didn't see him, we were just informed to listen to our leader ». Mineworker 1 concurred: « He was not in a right place to talk to us as a leader, as our president, this thing of him talking to us while he is in a Hippo. We wanted him to talk to us straight if he wanted to ». When he did speak, his message was simple, crude even. « Mr Zokwana said the only thing he came to tell us was that he wanted us to go back to work, and that there was nothing else he was going to talk to us about » (Mineworker 8).

Apparently the workers repeated their demand that they only wanted their employer to address them, not Zokwana (Mineworker 8). About five minutes after Zokwana left, Joseph Mathunjwa, president of AMCU, arrived, and although he was accompanied by a Hippo, he came in his own car (Mineworker 8). According to Mineworker 6, Mathunjwa said that he was sympathetic to the strikers, but cautioned them that he too had been denied access to the employers. However, he added that because he had members at Karee he would try again to meet them the following day. The police presence had increased on the Wednesday, and on the Thursday morning, 16 August, more forces arrived. This time the police were accompanied by « soldiers », probably para-military police dressed in similar uniform to the police, and they brought trailers carrying razor wire (which the workers mostly refer to as barbed wire) (Mineworker 8 and 9). Mineworker 9 says that workers « shouted » for other workers to join them. In the early afternoon on this fateful day, Mathunjwa returned, this time without any escort (Mineworker 10).

According to Mineworker 10, he told his audience that the employer never « pitched » for their scheduled meeting, using the excuse that he was at another gathering (presumably with police chiefs)¹³. Mineworker 10 added that Mathunjwa told the strikers they should return to work, because if they stayed on the mountain any longer a lot of people might die. There was some scepticism about this advice. For instance, Mineworker 2's response was that Mathunjwa should « go back, because we are not AMCU members, we are NUM members ». Mineworker 8's response was that, on the mountain, they had been eating together and making fire together, and it was like home. They weren't leaving, he said, adding that « we do not want any union here ». Mineworker 9's account was slightly different again. According to him: « We said, Comrade, go home. You did your best, but we will not leave here until we get the R12 500 we are requesting, and if we die fighting, so be it ». The last phrase resonated with a famous speech by Nelson Mandela, and

¹³ Speech by Jeff Mphahlele, in book.

Mineworker 9 pursued this, albeit with a twist. He said: « We should talk and negotiate through striking, that is how Mandela fought for his country ». Mathunjwa made one last attempt to convince the workers. He went down on his knees and begged them to leave (Mineworker 2). Few accepted his plea. About twenty minutes later, at 15.53, the massacre began.

The massacre of 16 August 2012

There are photographs of the assembled workers when Mathunjwa was addressing them, just before he left the scene. They are a large crowd, roughly 3 000 strong, spread between the mountain, the hillock to its north and lower ground between the two [...]. They look peaceful, not threatening anyone. Yet, additional armed police were rapidly brought to the field around the mountain, and some were manoeuvred into new positions, effectively encircling the workers. Much of this build-up was watched by strikers still sitting on the mountain. The media quickly retreated from just below the mountain to a safer position, from where they would record the opening of the massacre (Mineworker 6). Mineworker 8 reveals Lonmin's direct involvement. Two « big joined buses from the mine » arrived delivering yet more police to the scene. Also « soldiers » appeared on top of their Hippos (these were probably Hippos of the classic kind). We later learned there were vehicles from each of the neighbouring provinces, but it seems there was even one, perhaps more, from the Eastern Cape. Mineworker 4 tells of strikers talking to homeboys from towns in the Transkei, and a witness quoted by Greg Marinovich mentioned that he'd been told that an Eastern Cape policeman had claimed « there was a paper signed allowing them to shoot¹⁴ ». Mineworker 8 says: « What really amazed me was that the truck that carries water and the other one that carries tear gas, they were nowhere near, they were standing

¹⁴ Greg Marinovich, « The Cold Murder Fields of Marikana », *Daily Maverick*, 8 September 2012.

right at the back ». Ominously, mine ambulances were already present when the shooting started (Mineworker 8).

Mineworkers assembled at Wonderkop Koppie during the strike. Photo Greg Marinovitch

A major concern for the strikers was seeing the police rapidly reel out the razor wire using two or more Hippos [...]. This shows the approximate position of the wire, which was positioned in a line northwards from a pylon close to the electrical power facility and then took a turn to the right in the direction of a small kraal (the first of three in that area)¹⁵. Mineworker 2 said they were being « closed in with a wire like we were cows, and one of the miners' wives said that the fencing was for rats and dogs¹⁶ ».

¹⁵ A kraal is a fenced area, roughly circular in shape, where cattle are kept overnight. They are also where cattle are killed.

¹⁶ Interview with wife of a mineworker.

The comments are significant because the police had begun treating the workers as if they were no longer human beings. A group of the miners' leaders, including Mambush, tried to remonstrate with the police. Their plea that a gap be left open, so that strikers could leave like human beings, fell on deaf ears. With guns aimed at the workers, it was clear that the police were now ready to shoot. A large number of the strikers rushed north eastwards in the direction of Nkaneng, where many of them lived.

It was now that the first shot was fired. According to members of our Reference Group, this came from the side of the miners who were heading towards Nkaneng [...]. Some fleeing strikers, including several leaders, now turned towards the right, hoping to escape through a small gap between the wire and the first kraal. Most continued northwards, so there were no hoards of armed warriors following this leading group, as suggested in some media coverage, though not by TV footage. One woman, a witness, later made the point that the strikers were running with their weapons down, and so were not a threat, and this can be seen in some photographs¹⁷. It was too late. The leaders' path was blocked by Hippos, and they were trapped. Mineworker 2 recalled: « People were not killed because they were fighting... We were shot while running. [We] went through the hole, and that is why we were shot ». The order was given to fire. The command probably came from a white man, who did so, according to Mineworker 6, using the word « Red »¹⁸. There were no warning shots¹⁹. According to Mineworker 2, who was clearly present, « the first person who started to shoot was a soldier in a Hippo, and he never fired a warning shot, he just shot straight at us ». Within seconds seven workers had been slain, killed by automatic gunfire right in front of TV cameras [...] In photographs, their bodies are pictured in a pile,

¹⁷ Genevieve Quintal, « Marikana commission, observers visit hostels, site of shootings », *Business Day*, 3 October 2012.

¹⁸ See also speech by Bhele in the book.

¹⁹ See speech by a strike leader in the book.

with a shack nearby. Moments later, another group of five men were killed, their bodies crushed against a kraal, as if cornered without any possibility of escape. Mineworker 8 questioned: « I get very amazed when the police say they were defending themselves, what were they defending themselves from? ». Some of the leading group, including Mambush, were able to turn back. They attempted to join other workers scattering in all directions²⁰. Many fled north; some went westwards in the hope of reaching Marikana; others just ran as far as they could and as quickly as their legs would carry them; and one, at least, crawled a long distance across ground, hoping to dodge bullets and Hippos (Mineworker 4). It is difficult to imagine how terrifying and disorienting the situation must have been. There were armoured vehicles all around; there were helicopters in the sky; horses charging to and fro; police sweeping through on foot; stun grenades making a noise as loud as a bomb; tear gas; water cannons; rubber bullets; live rounds; and people being injected with syringes. This was not public order policing, this was warfare. A strike leader remarked: « Water, which is often used to warn people, was used later on, after a lot of people were shot at already²¹ ». Perhaps confirming this, on 20 August we found blue-green water-canon dye in an arc well to the west of the mountain, far from the initial front line. Similarly, Mineworker 10 asserted: « They lied about rubber bullets. They did not use them ». I have not heard of the use of injections before, and it remains to be seen why they were used and to what effect. Helicopters used a range of weapons. Of the 34 workers who were slaughtered on 16 August, 12 died in the opening encounter. About eight died in various locations nearby. The remainder were killed in one small location. This is the place known by the Inquiry as Kleinkopje. But South Africa is littered with small koppies and it seems more appropriate to call it Killing Koppie. Here, some 300 metres to the west of the mountain, on a low rocky

²⁰ Mambush did not get far. His body was found close to the first group of corpses.

²¹ See speech later in the book.

outcrop covered with shrubs and trees, the police killed 14 workers. On a grassy plane with few large bushes this was an obvious place to hide from bullets and Hippos, but it was relatively easy for the police to encircle and then move in for the kill. Two helicopters came from the north, depositing their paramilitary cargo, and two or three Hippos moved in from the south. Mineworker 9 told us: « That is where some of our members went in and never came back... the people who ran into the bush were ones being transported [in ambulances and police trucks] ». On 20 August, when we were directed to the Killing Koppie, we not only found letters on the rocks that had been spray-painted in yellow, marking sites from where bodies had been removed, we also saw pools and rivulets of dried blood discoloured by the blue-green dye²². Mineworker 5 was present on the Koppie; one of those lucky to survive. He recalls: « You were shot if you put up your hands ». Needless to say, he did not raise his hands. Rather, he says: « I was taken by a gentleman who was of Indian ancestry. He held me and when I tried to stand up I was hit with guns, and he stopped them » A drop of humanity in a sea of bestiality. Some workers were disarmed and then speared by the police (we heard this from a number of strikers including Mineworker 5). Whatever view one takes of the initial killings, it is clear that the men who died on the Killing Koppie were fleeing from the battlefield. Moreover, the precise locations of deaths and the autopsy evidence tend to reinforce the account provided by Mineworker 5, leading one to the conclusion that Killing Koppie was the site of cold-blooded murder²³. [...]

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The bloodshed, cruelty and sorrow of the massacre could have led to the collapse of the strike. That is what Lonmin, the police and NUM had expected. But it was not to be. Somehow, surviving

²² Thapelo Lekgowa, Botsang Mmope and Peter Alexander, « Geography of a massacre », *Socialist Worker*, 21 August.

²³ See Marinovich, « The Cold Murder Fields of Marikana ».

leaders managed to rally the workers and stiffen their resolve to win the fight. The bloodshed, cruelty and sorrow of the massacre could have led to the collapse of the strike. That is what Lonmin, the police and NUM had expected. But it was not to be. Somehow, surviving leaders managed to rally the workers and stiffen their resolve to win the fight. [...] This was one of the most remarkable acts of courage in labour history²⁴.

Summary

A few weeks after the south african police killed 34 people involved in the mineworkers' strike at Marikana, on 16 August 2012, the author and his colleagues have conducted interviews with surviving mineworkers and trade-unionists involved in the conflict in order to understand what happened. Using the collected evidence, the article recounts the precise development of the strike and demonstrates that, considering the balance of forces and the massive scale of the intervention, it was a deliberate act: a cold-blooded massacre. This reconstruction is an extract of a larger book entitled: *A view from the mountain : a case to answer*.

Key-words: South Africa, Marikana, strike, mineworkers, massacre

Résumé

Marikana, autopsie d'un massacre de sang-froid

Quelques semaines après l'intervention armée de la police sud-africaine dans la grève des mineurs de Marikana, faisant 34 morts, le 16 août 2012, l'auteur et ses collègues ont réalisé des entretiens avec des mineurs survivants et des syndicalistes engagés dans le conflit afin de comprendre ce qui avait eu lieu là. Sur la base des témoignages recueillis, l'article retrace le déroulement précis de la grève et démontre ensuite, au vu du déséquilibre des forces et de l'ampleur de l'intervention, qu'il s'est agi d'un acte délibéré : un massacre de sang-froid. La reconstitution présentée ici est un extrait d'un ouvrage plus vaste intitulé *A view from the mountain : a case to answer*.

Mots-clefs : Afrique du Sud, Marikana, grève, mineurs, massacre.

²⁴ This paragraph is the last one of the book.