

Centro de Estudos Africanos

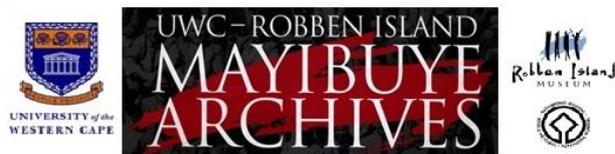
# The Mozambican Miner: A study in the export of labour

## Part I: The export of labour

First published by the CEA in 1977

Republished in 2012 by the Ruth First Papers Project

[www.ruthfirstpapers.org.uk](http://www.ruthfirstpapers.org.uk)



BACKWARD CAPITALISM AND NORTHERN COLONIALISM

... use of the colony of Mozambique as a labour reserve, ex-  
... labour outside the territory where it fueled centres  
... north African capital accumulation, is one of the domi-  
... characteristic of the Portuguese colonialism of Moz-  
... in the late 19th and throughout the 20th century.  
... is also a continuation of the dependent character of  
... Portuguese colonialism and Portuguese capitalism throughout  
... history.

PART I

THE EXPORT OF LABOUR

... periodization of Portuguese capitalism and the occupation of Moz-  
... has yet to be produced, but it is clear that from  
... century onwards the activities of Portuguese  
... capital, through the trade in gold, then in  
... and that in slaves, were able to be processed at  
... accumulation and a Portuguese metropolitan  
... formation and a Portuguese metropolitan  
... On the contrary, Portugal's weakness within  
... and her submission to unequal international  
... transition from merchant to indus-  
... capital.

... Mozambique, in the period 1875 to 1890 the Portu-  
... had occupied itself with collecting customs  
... along the coast and with the mono-export in slaves,  
... at the height of the imperialist power rivalry in  
... of British imperialism in the  
... African region, Portugal could exploit her colonies  
... and by 1890.

... primary research on the periodization of Portuguese  
... is based on a seminar presen-  
... the Centro de Estudos Africanos during April 1977 by  
... de Costa and Luis de Brito. For the later period  
... this material is based on a draft  
... of Luis de Brito 'O colonialismo português desde o  
... 1930'. Work on the periodization of  
... by D. Vield is now in progress  
... as 'Some characteristics of the  
... relating to industriali-  
... (Lisboa) 1977.

BACKWARD CAPITALISM AND BACKWARD COLONIALISM

The use of the colony of Mozambique as a labour reserve, exporting labour outside the territory where it fueled centres of South African capital accumulation, is one of the dominant characteristics of the Portuguese colonisation of Mozambique in the late 19th and throughout the 20th century. It is also a continuation of the dependent character of Portuguese colonialism and Portuguese capitalism throughout their history.

A detailed periodisation<sup>1</sup> of Portugal's occupation of Mozambique has yet to be produced. But it is clear that from the fifteenth century onwards the activities of Portuguese mercantile capital, through the trade in gold, then in ivory and then in slaves, were unable to fuel processes of primitive accumulation which would consolidate a Portuguese capitalist social formation and a Portuguese metropolitan bourgeoisie. On the contrary, Portugal's weakness within the world system and her subjection to unequal international competition blocked her transition from merchant to industrial capital.

Thus in Mozambique, in the period 1785 to 1870 the Portuguese state had occupied itself with collecting customs duties along the coast and with the mono-export in slaves. By 1870, at the height of the imperialist power rivalry in Africa and the consolidation of British imperialism in the southern African region, Portugal could exploit her colonies only unevenly and by proxy.

---

1. These summary remarks on the periodisation of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique are based on a seminar presentation to the Centro de Estudos Africanos during April 1977 by Nogueira da Costa and Luis de Brito. For the later period (see the following page) this material is based on a draft paper by Luis de Brito 'O colonialismo português desde os finais do século até 1930'. Work on the periodisation of Mozambican industrialisation by D. Wield is now in progress and has been part-published as 'Some characteristics of the Mozambican economy particularly relating to Industrialisation'. (Mimeo)

Accordingly in the period of the Chartered Companies, Portugal sub-contracted her colonial exploitation in the north of Mozambique to British, French, German and other international capital. Under the system of Chartered Companies, the Portuguese government leased out a great part of Mozambique by granting concessions to private foreign capital to administer huge tracts of the colony. Thus the Nyassa Company established in 1891 by largely German capital had jurisdiction over an area of 190,000 km; the Mozambique Company established in the same year by British and French capital, controlled a concession of 155,000 km; and the Zambesi Company established in 1892 by French capital, together with others like the Societé du Modal of 1904 and Britian's Sena Sugar Estates, constituted a major sector of the colonial presence.

At home the Portuguese economy was archaic and bankrupt. In the colonies the shortage of Portuguese capital resulted in heavy reliance on British, European and, later, South African capital. This meant that the Portuguese colonial system lacked the capacity to valorise the economic and labour resources of the colony. In the past slaves had been used not for production but for sale as export commodities. The prazos, far from being agricultural estates, had in fact been installed to guarantee the circulation of commodities in regions crossed by trade routes. So, too, with the turn of the 19th century, Portugal's more secure physical presence in the south - after the defeat in 1895 of the Gaza state - led in small part only to the organisation of forms of labour exploitation within the colony. The immediate response to the defeat of the rebellion of 1897 had been to profit by the export of labour. For this was the time of the establishment and rapid early growth of the South African mining industry. This dictated co-operation up to the hilt with the South African economy.

Even in later periods, as from 1929 onwards, when the Chartered Companies had been dissolved and attempts were made to assert the interests of the Portuguese ruling classes, and, for instance, to induce Mozambican peasants to grow cotton and other raw materials for Portuguese industry, these attempts at economic assertion could be carried out only with the co-operation of British-based multi-national capital and within the framework of continuing integration of the Mozambican economy within that of South Africa and, to a lesser extent, that of Rhodesia.

Beginning just before, but increasingly rapid after 1945, and particularly 1954, there was a growth of Portuguese capital in Mozambique. This capital was dominated by the large monopoly groups which had come to exercise increasing influence over the Portuguese state. At one and the same time these monopoly interests extended their presence and yet they opened the colonies to a new phase in the entry of foreign capital. The period saw growing industrialisation, but it was an industrialisation dominated by the export sector, and one

with emphasis on the consumption demands of a growing settler population.

In this later period, even as Portuguese capital grew stronger, the striking trend was Portugal's loss of her export market to her own colony, Mozambique. Whereas in 1947 of total Mozambican exports, 31.7 per cent went to Portugal and in 1960 this had increased to 40.03 per cent, imports to Mozambique from Portugal fell in this period:

1947	35.22 per cent
1960	28.6 per cent

Portugal's loss of ground in the Mozambican economy in the 1960s and the 1970s illuminated the two cardinal characteristics of the Mozambican economy which have been consistent throughout the historical phases of Portuguese colonialism:

- (1) The continuing dependence on foreign capital.
- (2) The role of Mozambique as a service economy within the Southern African region. These services comprised the provision of railway and harbour facilities for exports and imports from South Africa and Rhodesia and, centrally, the function of Mozambique as a labour supply area. It will be seen in the following pages that the barter of labour for transport service facilities was by no means incidental but was in fact the axis of Portuguese-South African collaboration in the exploitation of Mozambique. Without the sale of labour the trade deal would not have been possible, and the extent and the persistence of labour exports (see earlier the calculation that between 25 and 30 per cent of Mozambique's wage labour was exported) is a central determinant of the character of Mozambique's dependence.

The colonial structure of the Mozambican economy was accordingly the outcome of a double dependence. On the one hand it was the product of dependence on a relatively backward capitalist economy constituted by the Portuguese colonial power. At the same time it was subordinated to the needs of the Southern African economic complex. It was this latter integration which became increasingly the predominant aspect of the structure of the colonial Mozambican economy. The productive forces of Mozambique were shaped not according to the needs of capitalist development in Portugal, but according to the needs of capitalist accumulation in Southern Africa. Portugal played the part of rentier, deriving the major source of income from invisible trade, and speculating on the sale of the labour-power of its African work-force.

#### A TWO-STATE SYSTEM

It was with the establishment of the gold mining industry on the Witwatersrand that labour export from Mozambique came to be organised on a huge and systematic scale. Before that, Mozambican labour had migrated to the Natal sugar

plantations, and to the diamond fields of Kimberley, but this flow of labour had taken place before the Portuguese colonial state had established its hold over southern Mozambique - south, that is, of the River Save.

The mining revolution in South Africa required heavy capital inputs and large and sustained supplies of cheap labour. Within South Africa gold mining interests intervened actively in state policy in order to create a cheap controlled labour force from which could be guaranteed rapid capital accumulation. At the same time the mining industry explored territories in Africa to its north, and even as far afield as China and other parts of Asia, in search of social formations where wage labour had not yet become generalised and where forms of cheap labour-power could be derived.

Mozambique proved to be the critical labour supply area in the formative years of the gold mining industry. The foundations of that industry coincided with the defeat of Gugunzana in 1895, the subordination of the Gaza state, and the imposition over a large part of southern Mozambique, of military government under which harsh and punitive measures were used to collect taxes and maintain colonial order. Now the Portuguese colonial presence could be extended beyond the leased areas of the north, beyond the trading posts of Inhambane and the fort of Lourenço Marques, and the way was open for the Portuguese administration to co-operate with South African mining interests to route labour to them and to profit from this trade in labour.

This co-operation was institutionalised in state-to-state treaties for the sale of the labour force. The mining industry needed long-term and sustained arrangements for the supply of cheap African labour. The Portuguese colonial state calculated on a continuing source of revenue and on assistance in building and maintaining the territory's infrastructure.

The Mozambican labour exodus to the mines was officially formalised for the first time in 1897. The Regulamento of that year constituted the first of a series of international agreements with the South African authorities.

APPENDIX I is a detailed chronology of these successive agreements and Conventions and of their content. It records the specific changes made from time to time on matters of length of contract, proportions of miners' wages which are deferred for payment within Mozambique; ceiling labour targets of variously 80,000 to 100,000 miners a year; and measures to be used for the control of the labour.

The labour export had thus, since 1897, been formally organised and controlled by the two state contracting parties. The Portuguese colonial government was guaranteed an income from the traffic in labour. This guaranteed income in turn gave the colonial state an enduring vested interest in continuing and enlarging the trade in labour. Structures were

improvised on both sides of the border to organise and supervise the movement of labour. A Portuguese Curadoria was established on the Witwatersrand to control the labour on the mines and the cash transactions between the two states.

The terms of the deal between the Portuguese colonial state and the South African mining industry, and thus an important faction of that country's ruling classes, persisted for the eight decades. In essence the transaction remained unchanged. It consisted of the exchange of a fixed quota of mine labour in return for the guaranteed routing through Mozambican ports and railways of a fixed percentage of goods to and from the Witwatersrand. Relatively minor changes apart, the series of international agreements entrench the following principles:

1. The mine labour has to be migrant. Each and every miner has to be repatriated on completion of his period of service, which is contractually fixed.
2. WENELA is guaranteed a labour recruiting monopoly. The Modus Vivendi of 1901 included a secret agreement between WENELA and the Portuguese authorities in Mozambique which was negotiated with the knowledge and consent of the then Transvaal government. It was this secret agreement which gave WENELA its monopoly. The Transvaal had the right to veto applications of labour agents seeking permission to recruit in Mozambican territory. Non-WENELA agents were simply refused licences. This WENELA monopoly over exported labour continued until 1965. In that year the Portuguese administration invited tenders (within the closed circle of administrators) for the establishment of three private labour recruiting bodies. Ostensibly the purpose was the control of clandestine labour to South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

In practice the establishment of three additional recruiting bodies enabled private Portuguese business interests to capitalise on the flow of labour. Three private recruiting bodies were licenced: ALGOS, ATAS and CAMON. They recruit

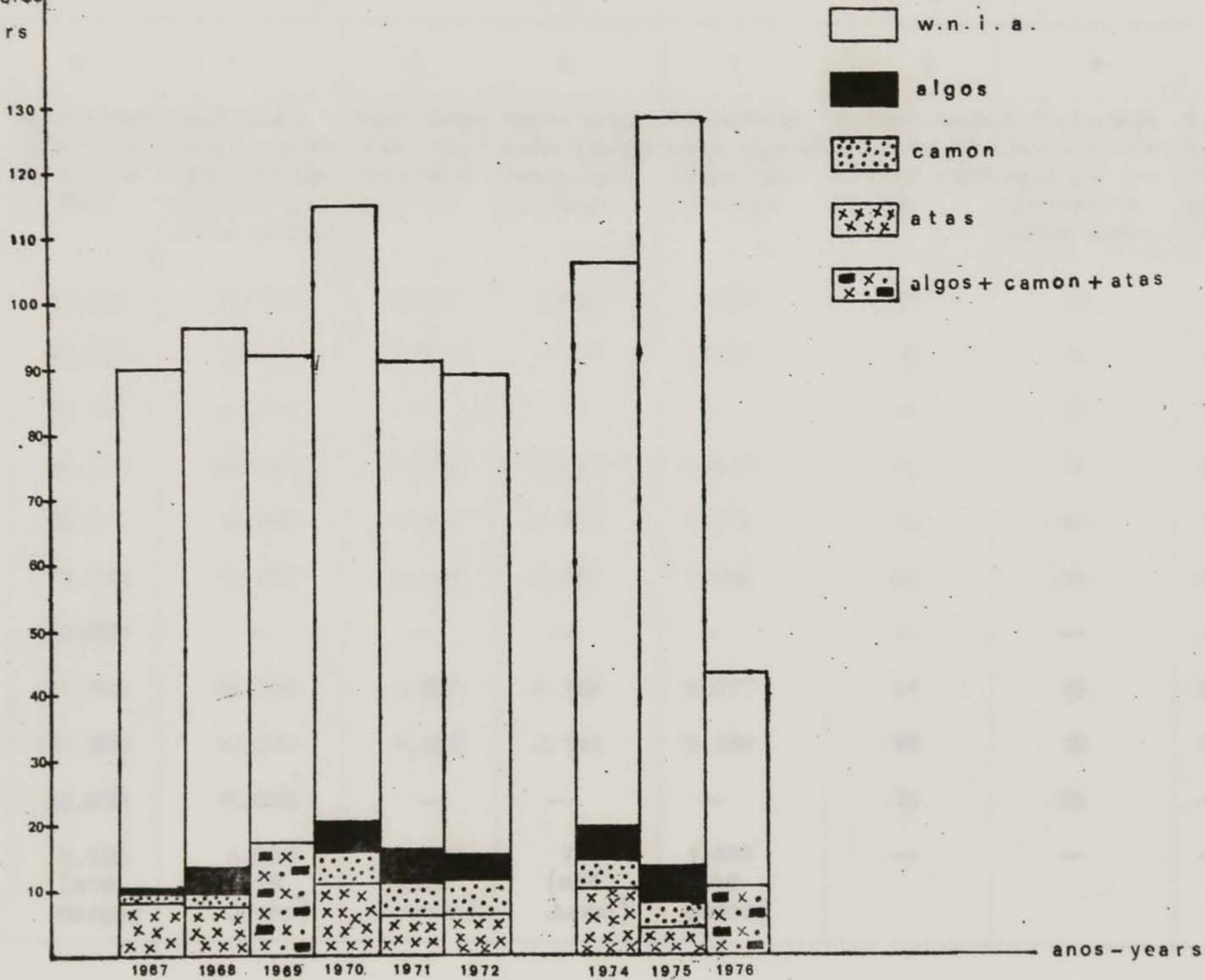
- 
1. There has always been substantial illegal migration into South Africa, though controls in recent years have reduced this. The great majority of Mozambicans illegally in the country were agricultural workers in Natal and the eastern Transvaal. There were also flows of workers seeking mine work but not through WENELA channels. Until the mid-1960s the offices of the Curadoria had authority to legalise the worker by issuing him a passport so that he could formally contract to a mine; in more recent years the miner illegally in South Africa has had to return to Mozambique.

NÚMERO DE TRABALHADORES RECRUTADOS PELA W.N.L.A., ALGOS, CAMON E ATAS - 1967-1976

NUMBER OF WORKERS RECRUITED BY W.N.L.A., ALGOS, CAMON E ATAS - 1967-1976

número de trabalhadores  
number of workers

(mil.)



DISTRIBUIÇÃO PERCENTUAL DE TRABALHADORES RECRUTADOS PELA W.N.L.A., ATAS, CAMON E ALGOS  
NOS ANOS 1967-1976  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS RECRUITED BY W.N.L.A., ATAS, CAMON e ALGOS 1967-1976

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Anos/ Years	Nº total de trab./Total nº of workers	Recrutados pela WNLA/ Recruited by WNLA	Recrutados pelas outras agências/Re- cruited by other agenc.	Recrutados pela Atas/ recruited by Atas	Recrutados pela Camon/ Recruited by Camon	Recrutados pela Algos/ Recruited by Algos	% Recrutada pela WNLA/ % recruited by WNLA	% Recrutada pelas outras agen./% re- cruited by other agenc.	% recrutada pela - % recruited by - Atas, Camon, Algos, em rel. a 4,- in rel. to 4		
									Atas	Camon	Algos
1967	90.059	79.463	10.596	8.221	1.555	820	88	12	77	15	8
1968	96.119	82.506	13.613	7.920	1.856	3.837	86	14	58	14	28
1969	92.704	75.425	17.279	—	—	—	81	19	—	—	—
1970	115.391	94.525	20.866	11.066	5.488	4.312	82	18	53	26	21
1971	91.727	75.517	16.210	6.041	4.991	5.178	82	18	37	31	32
1972	89.612	73.735	15.877	6.381	5.551	3.945	82	18	40	35	25
1973	—	74.689	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1974	106.937	87.169	19.768	9.923	4.168	5.677	81	19	50	21	29
1975	128.381	115.309	13.072	4.520	3.184	5.368	90	10	34	24	42
1976	43.488	32.803	10.685	—	—	—	75	25	—	—	—
1977	—	8.825 (até Março)	4.684 (até Junho)	2.490 (até Junho)	709 (até Junho)	1.485 (até Junho)	—	—	—	—	—

labour for mines which are not affiliated to the Chamber of Mines - mostly platinum and some coal mines - and for agriculture, especially on the Natal sugar fields. Since 1972 the system of deferred payment has been operated by these recruiting organisations, though the scales for immediate and subsequent payment are somewhat different from those operated under the WENELA system. The principal difference between the two recruiting systems is that though under WENELA the miner, except for his contractual right to reject a maximum of three mines (under more 'normal' recruitment conditions than at present) has no further say over his allocation, under the ALGOS, CAMON and ATAS system the worker who signs his contract in Mozambique is attested to work for an employer chosen or stipulated at that point. Returns on labour recruiting, as in the case of WENELA, are regularly furnished to the Ministry of Labour (Instituto de Trabalho). These, as shown in the Graph of Recruited Labour, are a rather low proportion of the total exports from Mozambique.<sup>1</sup>

3. Labour recruiting has, for the greater part of the period, been restricted to areas south of latitude 22° south.

For a while, from about 1903 to 1913 the Niassa Chartered Company, then failing in its other economic enterprises, became itself a supplier of labour to the mines. In 1908, for instance, there were 764 men from Nyassa working in South Africa. After 1908 when the Company converted into Niassa Consolidated and had an input of South African mining capital, it intensified its labour recruiting operations and regularly delivered labourers to WENELA at the coast. But after May 1913 recruitment north of that latitude was prohibited. The prohibition did not mean that there could be no recruits from areas to the north. Labourers could move south of the 'line' and 'offer' themselves on contract to WENELA stations there. It did mean that WENELA could carry out no active recruiting operations in the northern provinces.

- 
1. Recruitment of agricultural labour has been made more difficult in the recent period. In terms of labour regulations laid down in mid-1977 in South Africa, Mozambican agricultural workers will be allowed to renew their 18-month contracts only if they have been previously employed on a regular basis prior to 1 July 1972. Workers who took up employment after that date will be allowed to complete their contracts, but will then be repatriated. It is estimated that in mid-1977 there were about 16,000 Mozambicans employed in agriculture in the eastern Transvaal alone. After the promulgation of the ruling, about 4,000 were estimated to have become subject to repatriation when their 18-month permits expire. Star, 4 June 1977.

WENELA records show the origins of labour north of this latitude for the years 1902 to 1913. After that date, labour which came from areas north of the River Save were recorded in WENELA's Progressive Comparative Statements of Output<sup>1</sup> according to the recruitment station where it was attested, and all WENELA stations are located in the southern provinces. Only a scrutiny of the individual contract forms, and of the record books kept unofficially by some WENELA sub-managers would reveal the actual home origins of contracted miners. Certain numbers of men from the northern provinces have continued to move south to contract for mine labour, though the overwhelming labour supply has been from the three southern provinces.

4. Wages and working conditions have been controlled by the two governments contracting parties and were imposed on the labour recruited under their agreements.

It was the existence of vast catchment areas of tied labour which enabled the mining companies, operating through their monopolistic labour recruiting body, to force reductions in the wages of mine labourers in the early years of the industry, to undermine the resistance of African workers in South Africa to these reduced levels, and to maintain consistently low levels of wages over decades.<sup>2</sup>

In later Agreements some attention was devoted to the nominal forms of 'protection' which the Instituto de Trabalho was to exercise over the workers. Contracts had to be signed in the presence of administration officers and deferred wages paid out under their supervision. The offices of the Curadoria in South Africa's mining centres were supposed to make regular inspection visits to mines and compounds. But the essential terms of employment and wages and working conditions are non-negotiable by the work force.

5. The minimum period of enlistment for a Mozambican contract worker has been twelve months, renewable to 18 months. (See Appendix I for changes in the length of contracts over the years). Inbetween contracts there

---

1. This is monthly return of all labour recruited.

2. Prior to the Boer War competition for labour between mine-owners and farmers created conditions under which African workers refused to work for less than R5 a month; after recruiting had been institutionalised in Mozambique and other parts of Southern Africa, WENELA was able to reduce the wages of mine labourers to R3 a month in 1901. See Graph for the changing wage structure of African labour.

is a compulsory period of six months return home.<sup>1</sup>

Though successive agreements have somewhat modified the minimum and maximum contract periods, labour migration from Mozambique has throughout been organised without reference to the demands of the agricultural cycle. A minimum contract period of 12 months means that the migrant cannot time his departure or his return, nor the length of his absence, in order to integrate wage work into the production activities of the peasant household.

6. For the mining industry, the contracting of Mozambican labour for such long periods means that more surplus value can be extracted for the overhead costs of a single contract. In other words, Mozambican mine labour had been consistently the most exploited of the contingents of labour used on the mines.
7. The colonial state in Mozambique derived revenue from mine labour not from any productive investment of this labour but merely from its sale. This has made it a passive recipient of labour fees, a rentier state, and a service economy.

At various times the Conventions have provided for the payment to the colonial state of a capitation fee for each recruit. There has also been provision for the Portuguese government to recover taxes from its subjects working on the mines, which ensured a vacuum-tight method of tax collection. Clearly, though, the principal source of state revenue from the sale of mine labour has been through the compulsory system of deferred payment of a fixed percentage of the miners' wages. Under certain clauses of the Convention, these sums of deferred payment were transferred to the Portuguese state in the shape of gold valued at a special premium price. This system was due to end in 1977 when South Africa revalued her gold reserves in consequence of an amendment to the Articles of Agreement with the International Monetary Fund. (See the special Memorandum on this subject).

8. This service role of the rentier state has made the Mozambican economy susceptible to the crises of the South African economy, and the strategies and vagaries, both economic and political, of its ruling classes. This sensitivity to the cyclical changes in the periodisation of South African capital has been demonstrated

---

1. For specialised grades of workers, like medical orderlies, compound 'indunas' and 'tribal representatives' (all terms used within the system of mine labour control) contracts may be extended to two years with the agreement of the Curadoria authorities. (Incidentally, the Curadoria has become the Mozambique Delegação in the recent period.)



### WHY MIGRANT LABOUR?

Over a prolonged period of time, then, Mozambique-generated surplus in the shape of living labour, has been exported to the South African economy and accumulated there as capital. The process has produced the markedly uneven development that is characteristic of the Southern African sub-system.

In South Africa, the development of the mining industry - the cornerstone of South African capitalism - consisted of a rapid process of concentration and centralisation of capital. This capital was accumulated on the basis of a system of migrant labour drawn from the wider Southern African region. The early monopolisation of the mining industry created the conditions for the setting up of a carefully planned and institutionalised monopoly control of the recruitment of migrant labour. This monopoly was strengthened by state-to-state agreements with supplier states to guarantee the stability and continued reproduction of this labour force. Thus, the migrant labour system constituted and continues to be the foundation of the accumulation of capital in the mining industry.

We can therefore only fully grasp the particularity of South African capitalism by analysing the system of migrant labour, for this is the specific nature of the exploitation of labour power in this system.

A considerable literature<sup>1</sup> now exists on the origins and development of South African capitalism, and as a central part, on the role and importance of migrant labour as the cornerstone of this particular form of accumulation of capital. It is not our purpose here to summarise or enter into this debate; but rather we shall attempt to present briefly some of the essential arguments as to why migrant labour constituted the source of the accumulation of capital in this industry.

As Marx has shown in his analysis of Capital, the development of capitalism in essence consisted in the historical process of the creation of the proletariat. Thus, a class of people was created which is totally divorced from the means of production and left with no option but to turn their ability to work - their labour power - into a commodity to earn a living. To assure the continued reproduction of the working class, the value of labour power has to be such that it allows not only for the reproduction of the worker's ability to work from day to day, but also for the reproduction of his family (since his children constitute the future workers). Thus in other words, the value of

---

1. See Bibliography

labour power is determined by the value of the basic necessities which the worker and his family need to furnish present and future labour power. It follows that the surplus value appropriated by the capitalist is limited by the value produced by labour power on the one hand and the value of labour power on the other. Historically, the bourgeoisie has always attempted to reduce workers' wages below the value of labour power, and did so through excessive lengthening of the working day, heavy women's and child's labour, etc. But inevitably, such attempts came into contradiction with the necessity to reproduce continuously the working class. Only through reducing the value of labour power itself resulting from the increasing productivity of the worker, could capital seek its expansion without threatening to deplete its life source.

The imperialist expansion of capital and its consequent integration of the oppressed nations in the international division of labour shaped by the requirements of finance capital, relegated the production of cheap raw materials to the working masses of the oppressed nations. Thus for example, within the international division of labour South Africa became a centre of the gold mining industry.

This industry required the formation of a working class and one of a very specific character. A system of migrant labour was created which distinguished itself from the working class of developed capitalist societies not primarily in that it migrates over long distances, but principally in that this class of workers never was completely divorced of its ownership of means of production. The migrant worker continued to own land and instruments of production, and hence continued to be able to produce part of his subsistence requirements as derived from these means of production. This allowed the capitalist producer to buy the labour power of this worker-peasant below its value, since part of the subsistence requirements of the worker and his family continued to be produced out of his peasant base which remained outside the sphere of capitalist production. Thus, pre-capitalist forms of production were made to subsidise the accumulation of capital by allowing the extraction of additional surplus value resulting from buying labour power below its value.

Obviously, such a system can only operate if the process of production, distribution and consumption inherent in the pre-capitalist social formation is broken up in part so as to generate surplus labour to be provided in the form of migrant labour to the mines. This partial destruction of the pre-capitalist modes of production was initially achieved through the use of extra-economic coercive means such as appropriation of the better land and relegating the population to land reserves where the production base is insufficient (e.g. the S.A. Bantustan); the imposition of taxes; and forced labour as well as through economic means such as the destruction of indigenous crafts due to the importation of commodities (e.g. capulanas, hoes and other instruments of production).

The weakening of the economic base of the peasant society

due to the extraction of labour power from it on the one hand, and the creation of new consumption habits on the other, gradually turned the migrant labour system into a system reproducing itself and one of economic necessity. Thus, as to the former, the changing division of labour as between men and women in the peasant economy (the men being set free for wage labour), the reduced access to land in some instances and the dependence on buying instruments of production as commodities, all these blocked the development of productive forces and made these communities dependent on income from migrant labour. As to the latter, new consumption habits of which alcoholism consciously induced by the bourgeoisie to assure a docile and addicted working class played no minor role, as well as the introduction of textiles and other consumer goods which furthered the dependence on migrant labour income. Thus, capital was accumulated on the basis of partially destroyed and partially reproduced pre-capitalist modes of production. The latter subsidised the former and thus allowed for extra-surplus value to be extracted.

---

#### Footnote

There is a good deal of literature on this process in South Africa itself and in other Southern African labour-supply areas. Thus Colin Bundy in 'The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry' writes "Much of South Africa's history revolves about the transition of a majority of her people - the rural African population - from their pre-colonial existence as pastoralist-cultivators to their contemporary status: that of sub-sistence rural dwellers manifestly unable to support themselves by agriculture, and dependent for survival on wages earned in 'white' industrial regions and on 'white' farms." Bundy's study demonstrates the emergence of an African peasantry in about the 1890s in the Transkei, but then its decline within four decades. He writes "This process was a necessary component of, and not separate from, the process of capitalist development in South Africa." But this process led, in the case of the Transkei, to a rapid diminution in the productive capacity of the peasants. That in turn, because it depleted the intensity of economic activity within the peasant areas, reproduced the necessity for more migrant labour.

Wolpe, citing the South African case again, has written of how "The production and reproduction of the migrant labour force thus depended upon the existence of a rough equilibrium between production, distribution and social obligation in the Reserves - the level of production in the Reserves together with wages more or less sufficient to keep the (historically determined) subsistence requirements of the migrants and their families, while land tenure and familial community relationships ensured the appropriate distribution of the Reserve product. This equilibrium was, however, inherently fragile and subject to irresistible pressures."

---

Footnote (continued from previous page)

(Wolpe, Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa : From Segregation to Apartheid.) Later studies of the Transkei have argued that while it was possible to identify pre-capitalist modes of production within that region and within these modes are 'structured by the dominance of the capitalist mode of production and its imperatives'. The evidence points to the fact that the greater part of all rural households are dependent for their reproduction on the sale of their labour-power. That the peasant and redistributive division of labour 'has been superceded by a capitalist division of labour, with the male as wage labourer, and the woman (unpaid) as reproductory labour.'

### WHY FOREIGN LABOUR?

We have tried to explain in the previous section how, in the early development of capitalism in South Africa, based on the gold mining industry, labour drawn from pre-capitalist formations had been crucial to the rate of surplus value. These pre-capitalist societies were by no means only those within the geographical boundaries of the South African state, like the Transkei and other reserve areas. On the contrary, labour drawn from outside those boundaries has been a continually significant factor in the process of capitalist accumulation in South Africa.

GRAPH shows the composition of the Mine Labour Force from 1904 to 1976, and clearly demonstrates the territorial origins, at different phases of the industry, of the African labour force. Accompanying the Graph is the set of statistics from which it was compiled.<sup>1</sup>

GRAPH shows the flow of Mozambican recruiting during the years 1902 to 1977 and also the standing force of Mozambican labour on the mines for that period. The two cannot correspond, of course, because the Mozambican mine contract is for a minimum of twelve months, the majority are for even longer periods and thus from one year to the next the recruiting figures will be less than the total labour force then in the mines.

The pattern of mine labour supplies over 75 years, from 1902 to 1977 demonstrates two distinct but related trends:

I. The differential proportions, within different periods, of South African and foreign labour, and the changing sources of foreign labour supply.

II. The fact of the remarkably stable and consistent character of the flow of Mozambican labour.

Viewed historically over longer than half a century, there have been certain rises and falls in the supply of Mozambican and other foreign labour. These must be interpreted according to two different but again related events. The first consists of the changes within the South African economy itself. On the whole, as demonstrated in the graph and the comparative statistics, the larger ebbs and flows of Mozambican mine labour, as seen in the more marked movements of the graph, relate to changes within the dominant economy of South Africa. At the same time, though to a lesser extent, the pattern of supply also relates to certain internal changes in Mozambique.

---

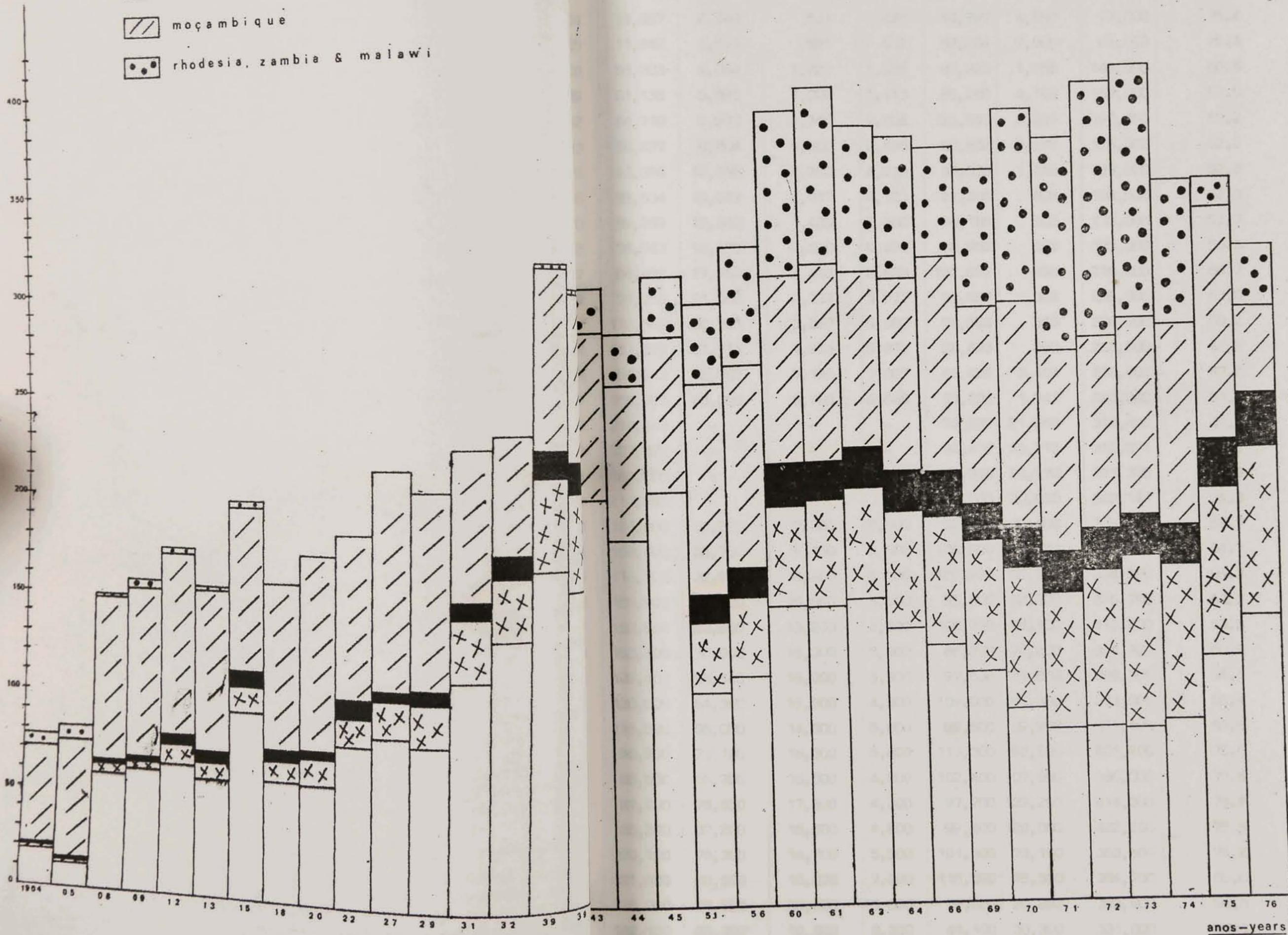
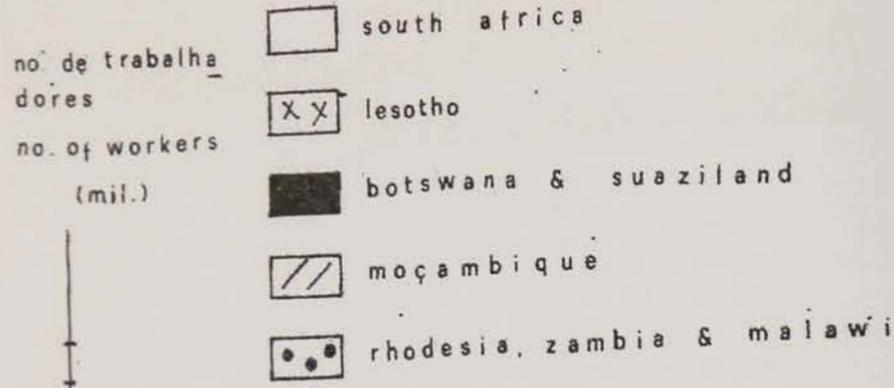
1. We are indebted for the statistics to the work of the Warwick Research Project of Martin Legassick and Duncan Innes and to their paper 'Capital Restructuring and the South African State: the case of foreign labour'. (Mimeo, 1977)

COMPOSIÇÃO DA FORÇA DE TRABALHO NAS MINAS DA ÁFRICA DO SUL

POR PAÍS DE ORIGEM - 1904-1976

MINE LABOUR FORCE COMPOSITION ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINES

BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN - 1904-1976



anos-years

COMPOSIÇÃO DA FORÇA DE TRABALHO NAS MINAS

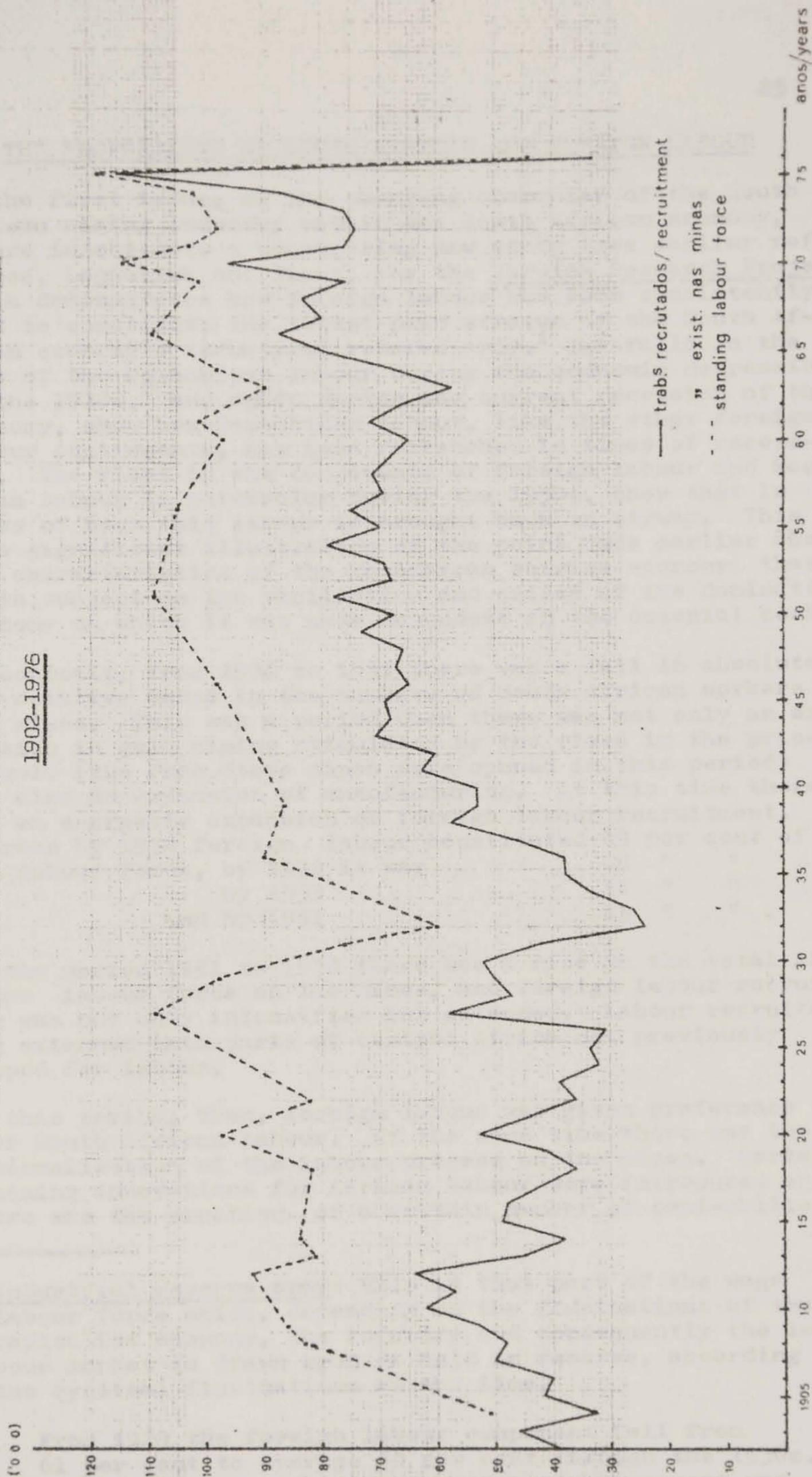
COMPOSITION OF MINE LABOUR FORCE

anos/years	South Africa	Basuto-land (Lesotho)	Bechuana-land (Botswana)	Swazi-land	Moçambique	N+S Rhodesia + Nyassal.	Total	% dos trab.estr. Foreign workers as a % of total
04	18,057	2,240	531	492	50,997	4,550	77,000	76.4
05	11,842	1,571	591	639	59,284	7,005	81,000	85.4
08	58,303	4,604	1,221	1,509	81,920	1,266	149,000	60.8
09	61,135	3,895	1,020	1,413	85,282	4,160	157,000	61.0
12	64,710	9,970	1,146	3,705	91,546	2,941	191,000	57.2
13	58,497	8,804	1,800	2,898	80,832	2,077	155,000	62.2
15	93,396	12,355	2,950	4,910	83,338	1,148	198,000	52.8
18	59,534	10,349	1,817	4,123	81,306	805	158,000	62.3
20	59,269	12,680	1,435	2,802	96,188	605	173,000	63.7
22	78,983	14,475	2,690	5,472	80,959	403	183,000	56.8
27	84,495	17,264	1,483	3,655	107,672	430	215,000	60.7
29	79,950	21,586	2,337	3,977	96,657	389	205,000	61.0
31	112,548	30,781	3,367	5,062	73,924	316	226,000	50.2
32	131,692	31,711	4,963	5,872	58,483	280	233,000	43.5
36	165,933	45,982	7,155	7,027	88,499	3,402	318,000	47.8
39	155,399	48,385	8,785	6,686	84,335	1,941	323,000	51.9
42	214,243	-	-	-	74,507	21,656	310,406	31.0
43	207,379	-	-	-	84,478	23,213	315,071	34.2
44	185,658	-	-	-	78,950	26,770	291,378	36.3
45	210,485	-	-	-	78,806	30,856	320,147	34.3
46	126,000	38,200	7,000	5,500	96,300	32,400	305,400	58.7
47	108,000	35,700	9,100	5,600	106,500	41,200	306,100	64.7
48	116,100	39,900	10,400	5,400	102,900	59,800	334,500	65.3
49	150,900	51,400	16,000	5,600	95,500	82,800	396,700	63.3
50	150,900	53,900	13,200	6,500	100,200	89,100	413,900	63.5
51	153,800	56,500	15,300	5,800	88,700	74,200	394,300	60.9
52	139,400	58,500	16,000	5,500	97,500	71,800	388,800	64.1
53	130,500	64,300	19,000	4,300	109,000	56,300	383,000	65.9
54	116,500	65,000	14,800	5,000	99,800	69,900	371,100	68.8
55	96,900	71,100	16,300	5,400	113,300	98,200	401,200	75.8
56	86,500	68,700	16,000	4,800	102,400	107,800	386,000	77.6
57	87,200	78,500	17,500	4,300	97,700	129,200	414,300	78.9
58	86,200	87,200	16,800	4,500	99,400	128,000	422,200	79.5
59	90,100	78,300	14,700	5,500	101,800	73,100	363,500	75.2
60	121,800	85,500	16,600	7,200	118,000	15,500	364,700	66.6
61	170,000	85,500	26,000	13,000	79,000	20,882	393,800	56.8
62	142,100	85,300	18,800	8,300	44,100	30,300	331,000	57.1

no. de trabalhadores  
no. of workers

RECRUTAMENTO E FORÇA DE TRABALHO MOÇAMBICANA EXISTENTE NAS MINAS  
FLOW OF MOZAMBICAN RECRUITING AND STANDING FORCE OF MOZAMBICAN LABOUR

1902-1976



THE PROPORTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN AND FOREIGN LABOUR

On the first issue, of the changing character of the South African mining industry within the South African economy, we are indebted to a penetrating new study (see earlier reference, Legassick and Innes, for the Warwick Research Project) which demonstrates how foreign labour has been consistently used to constitute the lowest paid stratum of the South African economy's industrial reserve army.<sup>1</sup> The falls in the size of the Mozambican labour during the economic depression of the 1930s,<sup>2</sup> and again during the current recession of that economy, show how Mozambican labour, like the other foreign labour contingents, has been retrenched in times of recession. The rises in the components of foreign labour and Mozambican labour in particular during the 1950s, show that in times of boom this labour is brought back on stream. This is a significant illustration of the point made earlier about the characteristics of the Mozambican service economy: that it is subject to the vacillation and crises of the dominating economy on which it was made dependent in the colonial period.

By contrast, from 1936 to 1951 there was a fall in absolute and relative terms in the numbers of South African workers on the mines. This was a period when there was not only an expansion in gold mining stimulated by the rises in the price of gold (the Free State mines were opened in this period) but also an expansion of manufacturing. At this time there was an energetic expansion of foreign labour recruitment. Whereas by 1932 foreign labour constituted 43 per cent of the labour force, by 1936 it was

by 1936	it was	48	"	"
by 1939		52	"	"
and by 1951		65	"	"

In the period 1951 to 1970 there was a rise in the total African labour force on the mines, and foreign labour recruiting was not only intensified but extended. Labour recruiting extended into parts of central Africa not previously tapped for labour.

In this period, then, foreign labour was given preference over South African labour. At the same time there was the rationalisation of the labour process on the mines. Certain training innovations for African labour were introduced and there was the creation of a certain number of semi-skilled

---

1. Industrial reserve army: This is that part of the wage labour force which, depending on the fluctuations of the capitalist economy, the industry and consequently the labour market is drawn upon or held in reserve, according to the cyclical fluctuations at the time.

2. From 1929 the foreign labour component fell from 61 per cent to average 50 per cent through the 1930s. Within this percentage the Mozambican component was static. SA recruitment figures rose substantially and in absolute terms and in proportion. (Legassick and Innes, op.cit.)

black operatives, especially on the new mines in the Orange Free State and Klerksdorp areas which were more capital-intensive. In the period 1964 to 1973 the foreign labour component continued to mount until it had risen from 64 per cent to 80 per cent of the total labour force.

It was after 1974 that the foreign labour component began to be heavily reduced. This is dealt with in the next chapters which discuss changes within the mining industry and its effects on Mozambican labour in the post-1974 period.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE FLOW OF MOZAMBICAN LABOUR

The early period of the gold mining industry, from 1888 to 1913 was the period during which the Chamber of Mines, and its labour recruiting body, WENELA, created a sub-continental supply of cheap labour. What is striking is the strength and effectiveness of WENELA as a labour recruiting organisation, it will be seen that it had the capacity to tap labour when it was needed and to turn off that supply with equal promptitude. The recruiting instructions to its network of WENELA stations were acted upon efficiently and rapidly. Beside a labour recruiting organisation of such power, government administrations were weak reeds. It took initially perhaps a decade for the system of labour recruitment to be well centralised, but when this was done, the organisation fulfilled its labour targets and rendered its complements of men to the mines with unfailing reliability.

Initially, when recruitment from Mozambique was not yet centralised, perhaps the greater part of the labour exodus across the border into the Transvaal had been clandestine. This movement of labour had been heavily escalated by the measures invoked by the colonial government in the wake of the 1895 rebellion and the destruction of the Gaza state, and also by the rinderpest epidemic of 1896-1898 which decimated cattle herds in the southern provinces. Private recruiters and labour touts battered on the exodus and organised it. No detailed account has yet been written of the early methods of recruitment, though recent research<sup>1</sup> into Southern Mozambique describes how recruiting was conducted by 'runners'. These worked for White or Asian recruiters and were employed to go from one settlement to another seeking prospective recruits for the mines. The runners or recruiting police were identified by their red hats and some had a uniform resembling that worn by the administration police. They carried hippo hide whips. They received a per capita payment on their results. They carried safe conduct passes issued by the administration, though in 1912 this system was ended because of complaints by Portuguese administrators that their own authority was being abused by the coercive methods of these labour recruiters. By then Negocias Indigenas had been in operation for some years trying to meet the internal labour needs of colonos who were unable to pay wages competitive with those offered by the Rand mines, and on whose account the colonial state conscripted forced labour via the local administration and the chiefs.

But by 1912 when certain limitations were placed on the activities of runners and recruiters, the pattern of labour migration had been well-established. It had initially been induced by force, after the conquest of southern Mozambique and

---

1. Young, Sherily, J., 'Changes in Diet and Production in Southern Mozambique 1855-1960, Mimeo, 1976.

the deprivations of the Portuguese colonial administration. In a fairly rapid period of time the movement of labour had become self-reproducing. Rural producers no longer had any measure of real choice. Either they were subjected to raids for forced labour or they contracted to work across the border.

Our chapter on the Penetration of the Money Economy sets out some of the economic pressures which propelled men into the labour market. Mine work in South Africa was the largest opening. The absence of employment for Africans in southern Mozambique and the consequent 'attraction' of mine work is graphically described in a Report on Native Labour Conditions<sup>1</sup> prepared for the Transvaal Chamber of Mines by one of its agents in 1922. In essence this Report argued, 'no improvement in general conditions can be expected under the present system.' The Report gave some instances of the conditions of labour, most of them drawn from the northern areas under the administration of the Chartered companies. But during 1921 and part of 1922 in the south, 'some 2000 natives were employed for months on the road between Chai-Chai (sic) and Kinavaan. All this labour was unpaid and barely fed. In some cases the natives even had to provide their own hoes, which cost about five shillings, and were worn out in Government service. Throughout the whole province roads had to be maintained in repair by the local natives without payment; and actually other government service was also forced and unpaid in most Posts!.

The fact that before the Boer War about 80,000 labourers or three-quarters of the total labour force on the mines were from Mozambique<sup>2</sup> and that at that time Mozambican workers were spending an average of three years underground<sup>3</sup> establishes that the industry was in fact virtually founded on Mozambican labour.

After this initial period, the most striking characteristic of the continued flow of the Mozambican labour force has been the stability of supply and the consistency of numbers, especially from the late 1920s (after the signing of the Mozambique Convention).

A vast area of research remains to be done on the regulation of this labour supply especially in the period between the two world wars when, with the exception of sudden dips in the depression years and a sharp rise to 107,000 in 1927 and 96,000 in 1929, the standing force of Mozambican labour stood at a more or less constant 80,000.

- 
1. Report on Native Labour Conditions in the Province of Mozambique, 1922, South African Labour Bulletin, July 1975.
  2. Transvaal Labour Commission, 1904, page 28. According to F. Wilson, Labour in South African Gold Mines 1911-1969, from 1896-8 Mozambican labour constituted 60.2 per cent of the mine labour force, and in 1906, 65.4 per cent. (Page 70)
  3. ibid. pages 4, 20, 246

In the period after the African mine strike of 1946, which was the most intense period of class struggle in the industry, foreign labour comprised 59 per cent of the total African work force. The mines adopted a policy of trying to forestall further labour unrest by recruiting less completely proletarianised, that is, more foreign labour.<sup>1</sup> This is the period when foreign labour supplies were diversified. In the same period Mozambique labour supplies rose.

WENELA records show that energetic efforts were made to step up recruiting in Mozambique. This was done to the extent that medical standards of recruits (the Chamber of Mines has always prided itself on its attention to scientific standards of physical examination) were lowered. A WENELA circular of 8th July 1946 read<sup>2</sup> :

#### MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF NATIVES

As a result of my recent visit to the East Coast areas, accompanied by the General Manager and the subsequent visit to Ressano Garcia of the Association's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. -----, the conclusion has been reached that in many cases the medical examination of recruits is too rigid. The physical standard required has not been lowered but Medical Officers and particularly Representatives should exercise common sense when judging "borderline cases" a large number of whom are at present being rejected unnecessarily. This not only means a loss of potential labour to the mining industry but the very fact that this type of native is turned back, greatly assists in spreading dissatisfaction against us and is a contributing cause to the increase in the flow of clandestine emigration. I hope the following notes will be of some assistance to you all:-

#### DEFINITE REJECTS:

Under Age: These should be judged by appearance and not by any record of age in the native's possession.

Flabby muscles and loose skin: When this occurs in older boys it has been found that extra feeding will not build up the native's physique. On the other hand when it occurs in a young man due to under-feeding, a week or ten days good feeding will show remarkable results. Such a native should put on 4 to 5 lbs.

Defective Development: Long, thin, young natives, with correspondingly long thin legs, even though they are over 20 years of age and scale over 108 lbs should not be sent.

---

1. Legassick and Innes, Warwick Research Project study, see earlier reference.

2. WENELA D.M.'s Circular No. 19/46

During 1950 when the drive for foreign labour was still in full swing, the WENELA General Manager came on a propaganda tour of Mozambique WENELA stations. Following the tour the stations were notified<sup>1</sup> under the heading 'Propaganda' that a supply of WENELA Soap Tablets was being sent for propaganda purposes:

Every effort is to be made to stimulate recruiting so that we may not fall below the figure for 1946, the lowest output since 1940. This (1950) has been a difficult year.

In 1950 WENELA stations were notified that they had to submit regular monthly reports on recruiting results and prospects, on crops and the value of crop sales, on weather and road conditions and on relations with the administration. They had also to report on new ideas to stimulate recruiting.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1953, recruiting targets were established for each camp (recruiting station) and a prize, the Camisola Amarela was instituted<sup>3</sup>. The circular sent to all district representatives in Gaza read as follows:

#### RECRUITING

I know that the Field Staff always offer their best in their work. However, I realise, too, that there is a certain monotony in routine work and to stimulate interest in recruiting this year I thought it would be useful if a spirit of friendly competition were aroused among the various Camps. With this object in view, I have established a target for the annual output of each camp. At the end of the year the camp whose excess above the target, expressed as a percentage thereof, is greatest will receive the "Camisola Amarela".

For this purpose, the results reflected in the December Comparative Statement will determine the output of each camp for the year. If enough enthusiasm is displayed in the scheme, it is my intention to bring it to the notice of the General Manager.

<u>Targets for 1953</u>			
Maxixe	8,500	Manjacaze	6,000
Penda	2,300	Chibuto	4,400
Massinga	5,600	Xinavane	1,600
Morrumbene	3,900	Guijá	3,000
Funhalouro	1,800	Macia	5,500
Vilanculos	2,600	Magude	1,400
Inharrime	2,550	Manhiça	1,800
Vila de João Belo	5,600	Matola	2,400
Alto Chengane	1,200	L.Marques	<u>2,800</u>
<u>Zavala</u>	<u>3,600</u>		

Trans. ends

1. WENELA Circular

2. WENELA Circular

3. WENELA Circular No. 2/53, Ref. L.M. Circular No. 1/53

The Camisola Amarela seems to have produced results. In October 1953 WENELA stations were advised that the General Manager had approved a money prize:

CAMISOLA AMARELA

With reference to my circular No.2/53 of the 17th January, 1953, I have pleasure in advising you that the General Manager has decided that an amount of £60 will be paid as a bonus to the camp winning the "Camisola Amarela". It is anticipated that the normal division of this amount will probably be £35 to the Representative holding the Recruiting Licence for the winning camp and the balance of £15 divided among the members of the native staff concerned. In certain circumstances, however, where there is an exceptionally long native staff, a greater proportion of the bonus might be paid to them.

The Camisola Amarela competition<sup>1</sup> was still being operated in 1961 when new targets for 1962 were announced. Camps with targets of 2,500 men had been placed in Section A, and the remaining camps were in Section B for which a minimum target of 1,000 had been established. This circular advised:

"CAMISOLA AMARELA"

I have pleasure in informing you that the winners of the "Camisola Amarela" for 1961 are as follows:-

SECTION "A" ...	CHIBUTO ...	108.8
SECTION "B" ...	A.CHENGANE ...	126.4

In due course, the Staff of these two Camps will receive the prize of Esc.4,000\$00 each awarded by the General Manager.

The targets for 1962 are shown on the attached list. From this, it will be noted that camps with targets of 2,500 and over have been placed in Section "A", the remaining camps being placed in Section "B", for which a minimum target of 1,000 has been established.

Divisional Agents will already have given instructions to Representatives as to the recruiting procedure to be adopted during the first quarter of 1962. In order to ensure that a proper standard is maintained for purposes of the "Camisola Amarela" for 1962, there will be a deduction of five recruits from the output of any camp in respect of each recruit rejected at Ressano Garcia on account of **Rejection on Medical Grounds**.

---

1. WENELA Circular No. 35/53 Ref. L.M. Circular No. 31/53

During the 1950s when the recruiting of foreign labour was in full swing, medical standards were re-examined. Thus a WENELA circular of 30 November 1953<sup>1</sup> stated:

Kindly notice that until further notice any native who is blind in one eye as a result of a mining accident may be forwarded for work on the Gold mines without prior reference to this office provided the native is otherwise fit for work. On his arrival at the Johannesburg compound arrangements will be made for his allotment, if possible to the mine on which he was injured, or if this is not possible, to some other suitable mine. Likewise a Native with a bone scar on the lower leg may be forwarded without reference to this office provided the scar has healed and provided the Native is otherwise fit.

Also in 1953 minimum rates of pay and a progressive service increment scheme which had been implemented, were brought to the attention of Mozambique stations. The service increment scheme required the worker to return on contract within a stipulated period of time. WENELA offices were notified that they could condone late returns if they were satisfied that "the native's extended absence is justified by the explanation offered". It was important, the circular<sup>2</sup> added, that "natives who suffer hardships under the Service increment scheme should not be penalised".

In 1958 the WENELA stations were making a special effort to recruit for coal mines. Thus a circular dated 18 June 1958 stated<sup>3</sup>:

#### COLLIERY LABOUR

A letter received from our district Manager reads:

"During his recent visit the General Manager stressed the need for additional Natives for work in the coal mines, where the system of entrenched minimum rates of pay and the progressive service increment scheme apply in the same manner as they do on gold mines. ...

As you know, during the short time he was at Chai Chai, Mr.----- was able to verify that natives from your Division do go to the Collieries and at Gulelene he discovered that the new Induna there, is an ex-colliery native.

Accordingly, Representatives should be instructed when preparing gangs to ask all natives present whether any of them wish to go to work on the collieries where the pay conditions are similar to those on the gold mines.

- 
1. WENELA Circular No. 40/53
  2. WENELA Circular dated 8 June 1953
  3. WENELA Letter No. 79/58

A note should be made in the "Remarks" column of the copy of the "Relação" sent to Ressano Garcia of any native offering himself for such work or of any native in possession of a service increment certificate issued by a colliery.

Representatives should supervise personally the interrogation of natives as to whether they would like to work on the coal mines."

In October 1958 the drive to recruit as extensively as possible was still on. Thus a circular<sup>1</sup> :

#### PROPAGANDA - CALICO SALT BAGS

You will shortly receive a quantity of Calico Bags which are to be used for the distribution of salt to Native women. It is considered that a present of salt will be a useful propaganda item for use when Representatives are camping out.

Salt should be bought in quantity and the bags filled (1/2 Kilo each) shortly before actual distribution. The cost of the salt purchased for this purpose should be debited to "Expenses Head Office - Propaganda - General".

In 1962 WENELA stations were notified<sup>2</sup> to restrict recruiting as far as the gold mines were concerned. 'Natives for coal mines' could still be accepted freely.

#### OUTPUT

I write to advise you that the present recruiting restrictions, in so far as gold mines are concerned, are to continue. On the other hand, Natives for coal mines can be accepted freely.

It is noted that some Representatives are doing more travelling than is called for, under present conditions ----- . From this it follows too, that as less contact will be made with Chiefs, etc., the distribution of cash presents will likewise be reduced.

The drop in the standing force of Mozambican labour on the mines in 1963 reflects the results of this instruction. Later in the 1960s the figures climb again, and continue to do so, into the ~~1970s~~. In 1973 WENELA found itself embarrassed by the flow of recruits, caused by drought conditions.<sup>3</sup>

#### RECRUITING

I confirm my telephone instructions of the 13th instant. As the flood of labour from all quarters continues -

- 
1. Circular D/M. No. 20/58 dated 9th October 1958.
  2. WENELA Circular I.E. No. 6A/62, dated 16 April 1962.
  3. WENELA Circular No. 13/73, dated 27 February 1973.

propably owing to drought conditions - the Manager (Moçambique) has instructed that certain restrictions will have to be introduced in order to reduce the present flow.

Accordingly, the following measures should be introduced forthwith:-

- 1) No re-engagement applications should be submitted until further notice.
- 2) A stricter physical standard must be enforced. Border-line cases among novices should be told to report back in June.
- 3) Old men and those who have not been to the mines during the last three years should not be accepted.

From 2 and 3, it is clear that only recruits who are 100% fit should be sent forward.

It is hoped that these restrictions will not remain in force for too long. However, failure to carry out these instructions implicitly could result in more drastic restrictions being applied.

The instruction to restrict recruiting had to be repeated with emphasis the following month<sup>1</sup>:

#### LABOUR SUPPLY

I transcribe hereunder the contents of a letter received from the Manager (Moçambique), which are self-explanatory:

"In connection with our recruiting orders for the month of March, the General Manager has written as follows:-

"The severe drought that is being experienced in most areas at present, coupled with a falling-off in the demand from other quarters, has given rise to an exceptionally heavy influx of labour to the gold mines. As a result, the ability of the mines to accept more labour is very limited, and men who do not measure up to all the standards for mining work, even if only temporarily, and for whom jobs have to be found on the surface, have become an embarrassment. I have, therefore, to request you to be careful to see that the recruits you send forward for employment on the gold mines in March, 1973, all satisfy the age and physical standards LAID down for mining work. The total number of recruits must not exceed 5,000 and it may be necessary for me to instruct you to keep the output below this figure.

The coal mines are in the same position as the gold mines and you will find this situation reflected in the orders you receive for the collieries in due course.

---

1. WENELA Circular No. 13/73, dated 27 February 1973

In 1973 the foreign labour component reached an all-time high of 80 per cent. But after that the proportion of foreign workers on the mines was reduced. This was the result of far-reaching changes within the mining industry which produced in turn a radical change in its labour recruiting policies.

The mining industry has been a major employer of foreign labour since the 1950s. The proportion of foreign workers on the mines rose from 10 per cent in 1950 to 80 per cent in 1973. This was due to a combination of factors, including the need for labour in the mining industry, the availability of foreign labour, and the policies of the mining industry. The mining industry has been a major employer of foreign labour since the 1950s. The proportion of foreign workers on the mines rose from 10 per cent in 1950 to 80 per cent in 1973. This was due to a combination of factors, including the need for labour in the mining industry, the availability of foreign labour, and the policies of the mining industry.

The mining industry has been a major employer of foreign labour since the 1950s. The proportion of foreign workers on the mines rose from 10 per cent in 1950 to 80 per cent in 1973. This was due to a combination of factors, including the need for labour in the mining industry, the availability of foreign labour, and the policies of the mining industry. The mining industry has been a major employer of foreign labour since the 1950s. The proportion of foreign workers on the mines rose from 10 per cent in 1950 to 80 per cent in 1973. This was due to a combination of factors, including the need for labour in the mining industry, the availability of foreign labour, and the policies of the mining industry.

The mining industry has been a major employer of foreign labour since the 1950s. The proportion of foreign workers on the mines rose from 10 per cent in 1950 to 80 per cent in 1973. This was due to a combination of factors, including the need for labour in the mining industry, the availability of foreign labour, and the policies of the mining industry.

CHANGES IN MINING IN THE 1970s

There is rather thorough documentation on the changes in the mining industry in the recent period, and the various factors which have contributed to these changes. These we summarise below :

1. Until the 1970s goldmining was considered to be a declining asset. This was transformed by the international agreement to revalue gold at market prices. As a result mining profits rose high and there was a considerable increase in the value of funds available for accumulation and re-investment.
2. There had been a continuing decline in the South African complement of African mine workers. The dependence on foreign labour had increased. But this had occurred at a time of spectacular changes in the politics of Southern Africa, and changes which brought into question the continued survival of white minority exploitative regimes, and more immediately still, the degree of reliance which the mines could place on their regular contingents of foreign labour.
3. During 1973 there was a wave of African strikes including ones on the mines, and other forms of worker resistance. In the period 1973-5 there were in all 33 cases of worker resistance on the mines, some of which involved Mozambican miners. As Clarke<sup>1</sup> has written :

These conflicts affected producer interests in two important ways: firstly, production levels dropped and costs rose as confrontations spread; and secondly, a 'bleeding' of labour supply took place as repatriation rose, strikers were dismissed and disciplinary action and 're-allocations' were necessitated.... The industry was totally unprepared for these sudden and large-scale conflicts which were made all the more serious by the high gold price. Among a host of other factors, the conflagrations were strongly related to low wages and the high degree of social control necessitated under compound conditions. The 1972-75 'wage reform' although begun before the compound violence escalated, would thus probably have in any event been necessary in some measure to re-stabilise the situation.

4. Thus the rise in the price of gold and worker unrest made it possible and necessary to pay higher wages to African miners. Without higher wages there was no possibility of drawing South African workers away from secondary industry and into mining - until, that is, the economic recession

---

1. D. G. Clarke, Contract Labour from Rhodesia to the South African Mines. A study in the international division of a labour reserve, Cape Town, Saldru Working Paper No 6, page 11-12

speeded the propulsion.<sup>1</sup>

5. The production of a changed labour force was also closely connected with, and a result of, increased mechanisation on the mines. While South Africa's deep mining technology is probably the most advanced in the world, it is an industry which is heavily labour-intensive, needing constant supplies of cheap African labour. As long as the price of gold was fixed there was a tendency to rely on cheap labour and to move rather slowly towards increasing capital investment. This was not true, however, for all mines. While lower-grade ore and lower productivity mines relied on cheap labour, newer, higher-productivity and more mechanised mines, principally those controlled by the Anglo-American Corporation, instituted higher levels of technology. Thus as early as 1962 Anglo-American had broken with the labour policies of the Chamber of Mines and had urged higher wages to step up South African labour recruitment so that it could have a more stable labour force among which it could institute a different wage structure on its higher productivity mines.

With the rise in gold prices plans for mechanisation were accelerated. The paragraphs below describe some of the advances in mechanisation, for these have important effects on the quantity and the quality of the labour force, and on the subsequent changes in labour recruiting and wage policy instituted by the industry.

#### Mechanisation

Certain mechanisation had already shown effects in the mines by 1975. For instance, Goldfields Consolidated of South Africa Ltd. reported an increase of productivity of 11.5 per cent underground employee over 1974.<sup>2</sup> A mine belonging to Joint Consolidated Ltd. In 1975 had increased production despite a labour reduction of 20 per cent in the mine. This was done by introducing scrapers for loading the ore (instead of hand lashing), mono-rail cars which required one worker rather than the two previously required, and mono-rope conveyors, used for carrying the mineral out of the mine. They were means to cut down unskilled labour near the mining, or stope, face. This was combined with more efficient management systems and maintenance systems and by bringing white miners into management planning so that they could see the importance of working as a team and the role of their team leaders. Courses for the training of African aides to white

---

1. A press report (Star 25 January 1973) wrote that labour recruiting agents reported that the flood of men seeking work 'was up 25 per cent compared with January 1972....' With the better-paid jobs at a premium thousands of Blacks are being forced to offer their labour at the gold mines. The immediate cause for the 1973 pressure of job-seekers was a severe drought in the Transkei.

2. South African Mining and Engineering Journal, November 1974, p.II.

craftsmen were begun and some African miners have acquired skills in, among others, boilermaking, fitting, electrical work and welding.<sup>1</sup>

The President of the Chamber of Mines, Mr. A.W.S. Schumann stated in 1975 that the total value of capital equipment used underground by the gold mines was less than R250 million. He expected that equipment to the value of more than R1000 million would be purchased during and as a result of the R150 million research programme over ten years.<sup>2</sup>

Much of the research and trials are taking place at or near the mining face (the stope face). "About 40 per cent of the Black labour force is employed there and mechanisation is of great importance in reducing the Black labour force and improving productivity."<sup>3</sup>

Trials are well advanced on one man mono-rail systems, on mono-rope systems that transport timber, sticks, and concrete bricks right to the stope face. Lightweight drills are in operation which eliminate the need for an assistant to the machine operator.

On the stope face drilling is being mechanised in two different ways. One is to improve drilling for dynamite blasting. The other is to eliminate the dynamite and to use rock cutting systems.

Anglo-American was introducing large mechanised drilling machines (costing R100,000 each).<sup>4</sup> These machines are operated by three Africans under a white supervisor and achieved record drilling depths per shift on their first trials in 1974. Another mine (Carltonville) improved efficiency 50 per cent by using short hole drilling.

The major research and development activity is in non-explosive methods of rock-breaking. The whole system of the mine is based on the periodic dynamiting of the rock. One group of miners is drilling holes in the rock in which the dynamite for blasting will be placed, while on the other face miners will be clearing the rubble from the blast. Both sorts of work must be finished at the same time for optimum efficiency, and then the next face is dynamited.

Already trial equipment is being used which avoids dynamiting. One method is drag-bit rockcutting i.e. to cut a 25mm slot about 150 mm into the rock face. This slot helps the removal of the rock-breaking with pneumatic or hydraulic picks. This is the most advanced method but others are being tried, particularly the impact ripper-mechanical system for ripping open the ground, and the swing hammer miner. All these three

1. South African Mining and Engineering Journal, July 1975, and Mining Survey, April 1975.

2. South African Mining and Engineering Journal, July 1975, p.31

3. ibid. page 16 Quote of Joint Consolidated's head of Industrial Engineering Department.

4. ibid. November 1974, page 80.

machines perform best in ground which is pre-stressed and fractured, as in the case in the deep mines where the effect of pressure has been to fracture the hard quartzite rock.

Another development is more suited to shallow mines. It is a system of boring the gold reef with a rotating bore called a raise borer. These machines are also used to make small shafts in the galleries near the stope face. They cost anything up to R750,000.<sup>1</sup>

These methods by themselves are well tested and can increase the mining rate considerably. The problems have been in mechanisation of other parts of the stope process, i.e. mechanisation of roof bolting, laying tracks, automatic waste packing for stope support, and so on. Experiments are well under way with mechanised conveyor belts to move the rock from a blast site. Some are armoured and move automatically into the stope before the blasts to catch the rock as it falls after the blast. The rock which is not on the conveyor belt will be lifted onto it by a plough which is moved up and down the face alongside the conveyor. It is estimated that these conveyors could increase productivity on the stope face three times. In March 1976 a spokesman of the Chamber of Mines research department said<sup>2</sup> that capital invested in stope faces then was about R100 million, which was about R3 million per principal mine. Mechanisation of the stope face would average at least about R7 million per mine. It would also involve high training costs and a build-up of the semi-skilled African work force which would necessitate a stable work force.

It is these changes in the technology and the deployment of the work force in the industry, together with increased worker militancy, and also, importantly, the South African economic recession which led to widespread African unemployment in that economy, which led to changed wage policies in the mines. There were changes in job grading and wage differential systems. This led to more African workers being categorised semi-skilled.

The changes in wage levels are seen in the Graph. In the period beginning with the 1950s and again in 1969 African wages had risen.<sup>3</sup> This was a period of chronic labour shortage but also of the beginnings of the rationalisation of the labour process and the introduction of training schemes for some African workers especially on the more capital-intensive mines. But the wage rises in this period were considerably outstripped by the rises in.

---

1. Times, 2 May, 1977.

2. South African Mining and Engineering Journal, March 1976, page 17.

3. For details of the wage rates in this period see F. Wilson, Labour in the SA Gold Mines 1911-1939, pages 178-9.

MINE WAGES (MINIMUM & AVERAGE) 1910-1976

EVOLUÇÃO DOS SALÁRIOS (MÍNIMO E MÉDIO)

ENTRE 1910-1976

ANOS	SALÁRIO ( POR TURNO)	
	MÍNIMO	MÉDIO
1910	-	18c
1911-16	-	20c
1921-30	-	22c
1931	17c	22c
1936-41	-	23c
1943	18c	23c
1946	22c	29c
1948	24c	29c
1949	27c	29c
1951	30c	36c
1956	30c	43c
1961	30c	48c
1964	34c	-
1966	-	59c
1969	40c	65c
1971	42c	-
1972	50c	81c
1973	72c	R1.10
1974	R1.60	R1.70
1975	R2.20	R3.00
1976	R2.50	-

the post-1973 period. By June 1976 the industry was paying a minimum rate for underground work of R2.50 a shift.

The changes in wage rates had an immediate impact on the source of labour supplies. The number of South African workers on the mines rose rapidly. This was accompanied by an absolute fall-off in the numbers of contracted foreign workers, which trend is continuing.

It is clear that there were limits to mechanisation of the industry. The new methods will seriously diminish but they will not break the dependence of the mines on a large supply of African labour. But newer, richer more capital-intensive mines will follow a distinctly different pattern from the older lower-grade ore mines. Within the work force, there will be the introduction of growing differentials in wages and skills.

Two of these factors will affect Mozambican mine labour in the immediate period:

- 1) the overall reduction in the use of foreign labour.
- 2) differentiations within the African work force and the reliability on more experienced and skilled workers.

These factors are reflected in the conditions of Mozambican labour after 1974.